



Arizona Cannabis Nurses Association

Heather Manus, RN, President
5505 E Paseo Cimarron
Tucson, AZ 85750
(505)716-6016
cannabisnurseheather@gmail.com

July 9, 2014

PRESS RELEASE

JULY 9, 2014

For Further Information, Contact:

Nurse Heather (contact information, above), or

Ken Sobel, Esq., Attorney for AZCNA

C: 619.208.2439 or E-mail: kennysocal711@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NURSES ASSOCIATION CELEBRATES VICTORY FOR VETS IN ARIZONA

Phoenix, Arizona

A year-long battle waged by the Arizona Cannabis Nurses Association on behalf of PTSD victims – particularly thousands of military service members and veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan – ended in victory on Wednesday when Arizona Department of Health Services (“AZ DHS”) Director, Will Humble, announced that he would yield to a Judge’s Decision and allow Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to be listed as a debilitating condition allowing PTSD sufferers to qualify for the right to use medical marijuana to treat the condition.

Nurse Heather Manus, RN, the President of the Arizona Cannabis Nurses Association (“AZCNA”), a nurse’s education and patient support group, hailed the decision on

behalf of PTSD patients state-wide. “This is a major step forward for our war heroes and others who suffer from PTSD. Unlike the conventional medications used for PTSD, medical cannabis is a gentle plant therapy which helps in all aspects of the disorder – fear extinction, memory retrieval and stress mediation.” Nurse Heather has been a medical director of a Santa Fe, New Mexico cannabis dispensary since 2010. As a Home Health Psychiatric nurse there, she frequently helped Veteran’s with PTSD to get off harmful pharmaceutical medications that have serious side effects, all through the use of Cannabinoid therapy.

“In New Mexico, PTSD patients have had safe access to cannabis since 2009, and after 4 years and several thousand patients, there has not been one reported adverse effect from its use.” A panel of doctors and scientists in New Mexico unanimously added PTSD in 2009, and unanimously retained it in 2013. Indeed, 14 states now approve medical cannabis for PTSD (including adult-legal Washington and Colorado), and the last 5 states to consider it have added it or retained it. New York – which adopted a medical cannabis program last month – included PTSD as a debilitating condition in its enabling legislation, and therefore became the 12th state to add PTSD. Arizona now becomes the 13th.

In total, 32 states have now approved some form of legal medical cannabis including 9 predominately “red states” whose state legislatures adopted a “Charlotte’s Web” law in 2014 allowing legal access to high CBD Cannabis Oil for the treatment of seizure disorders in children. Two others – Missouri and North Carolina – are set to add such a law this year.

The AZCNA was represented by Ken Sobel, a Tucson native and former student body president of the University of Arizona. He is also the founder of Spring Fling and the Arizona Student Association. Mr. Sobel applauded the Director’s decision, stating: “This was actually an easy case to prove. Judge Shedden got it right. Politics aside, the science is the same in Arizona as it is in New Mexico, Nevada and California – contiguous states that have listed PTSD in their medical cannabis programs. Hats off to the AZCNA for tirelessly and selflessly pursuing this case on behalf of our returning war heroes.”

This is especially so in Arizona, the poster child for VA healthcare neglect – where many of our returning vets, including those with symptoms of PTSD, spend 6 months, or more, waiting for even a first visit. Now they can safely access medical cannabis at any of the more than 80 legal dispensaries statewide, once they receive a medical recommendation and AZDHS Patient Card.

The evidence proved that more than 500,000 Arizona residents suffer from PTSD, a serious and debilitating condition involving nightmares, flashbacks, social issues and hyper-vigilance. Although the majority of PTSD sufferers are women – typically as a result of domestic or sexual abuse – it has reached epidemic proportions for our veterans and returning service member community. Government studies show that more than 30% of our returning war heroes suffer from PTSD, and twenty-two veterans commit suicide daily.

On July 25, 2013, the Arizona Cannabis Nurses Association (“AZCNA”) filed a 109 page Petition with AZDHS to Add PTSD as a debilitating condition. The Petition was initially approved for a public hearing which was held at the Department of Health Services in Phoenix on October 29, 2013. Fourteen witnesses, including three doctors and one registered nurse, testified in favor of adding PTSD, and only one anti-smoking advocate against it. However, the AZDHS only allowed each witness about 2 – 3 minutes to testify. In addition, 700 PTSD patients and family members urged the Department to add PTSD through an AZDHS website portal with only two opposed.

However, Director Humble rejected the Petition on January 14, 2014, and the AZCNA appealed.

The Arizona Office of Administrative Hearings (“OAH”) appointed Judge Thomas Shedden to hear the appeal, and between March 26, 2014 and May 15, 2014, more than 24 hours of evidentiary hearings occurred. Three medical doctors – including a doctor who served as the chief medical officer for the US Olympic Track & Field team – and Cannabis Nurse Heather – testified to a “reasonable degree of medical certainty” that medical cannabis was “safe and effective” in the treatment of PTSD.

On June 4, 2014, Judge Shedden announced his decision reversing the Director’s decision, and ordered that PTSD be added as a debilitating condition. Judge Shedden found that AZCNA had presented “substantial evidence” that PTSD sufferers receive a palliative benefit from medical cannabis.

After 35 days, Director Humble finally conceded to the Judge’s decision.

This is a landmark case. This is the first time in the United States where a debilitating condition was added by a Judge’s ruling following a denial by a state agency. Further, this is the first new condition added under Arizona Law in the four year history of the Arizona Medical Marijuana Act. AZDHS had previously denied all 20 petitions submitted seeking to add PTSD and other conditions.