

## **Voice of the People: Living With Pain**

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Growing up as the daughter of a physician, medical issues were frequently discussed at home; malpractice, illnesses, surgery and drugs were all common topics of conversation. I often read through my father's medical journals and found them to be both fascinating and educational. As an adult, medical journals still intrigue me, and I subscribe to the New England Journal of Medicine.

Today I am personally faced with several medical issues. I live with multiple forms of arthritis and, as a result, do a great deal of research on them. I have had multiple joint replacements due to my arthritis, with more surgeries looming in the future. I also have been diagnosed with Dercum's disease. Dercum's disease is marked by painful fatty tumor growths. It is a progressive, crippling, disfiguring and extremely painful disease. This dreadful disease has been a part of my life since 1984.

My pain has many sources. I must constantly battle discomfort that radiates from my nerves, muscles, connective tissue, bones, vascular system and lymph nodes. Then there are the painful tumors to be considered!

Because of all the difficulties associated with my medications, I found myself searching for an alternative source of pain relief. Before long, I was studying the pros and cons of medical marijuana for pain relief. I found sound evidence that supports its use for chronically ill patients like myself.

One of the most startling facts that I discovered about medical marijuana is that not one single person has ever overdosed from it! On the other hand, about 500 people die every year from aspirin overdoses. Acetaminophen toxicity actually causes liver damage or worse.

It is my sincere hope that the Illinois legislature chooses to help patients like me this year by giving us another option to manage our pain besides the narcotics many of us have become reliant -- even addicted -- upon. Some people say that allowing medical marijuana use will just make marijuana accessible to many who are not exposed to it now. This is quite laughable when one considers how many families have members currently exposed to potentially lethal medications like anti-depressants, muscle relaxants and pain medicines such as codeine and morphine only because they have a sick relative living with them.

Please remember that there are people like myself who live with constant pain that cannot

be managed with current legal medications. We desire to be more active with our families and our communities, and maybe even feel good enough to rejoin the workforce. Medical marijuana can provide relief from our devastating illnesses and allow us to have a better quality of life.