

Irish toddler back home after medical cannabis becomes legal

Friday 9th December 2016 By Lynne Kelleher



Tristan is now back home

Two-year-old Tristan Cahalane flew home at the weekend from a year of treatment for his severe epilepsy in the U.S. after making history by becoming the first person to be legally allowed medical cannabis in Ireland.

The little Cork boy suffers from a rare, severe form of epilepsy called Dravet Syndrome, which left him coping daily with up to 20 seizures, which could last more than an hour and resulted in him being regularly hospitalised.

He was on nine medications from the age of five months, but now he is down to just two prescription medications and a special strain of cannabis oil medicine which have left him virtually seizure-free.

And he was invited to turn on the Christmas lights in his hometown of Dunmanway in Cork on Sunday following his happy return home.

His mother Yvonne and father John made the decision to split their family, with Tristan and his older brother Oscar going to the U.S. for the year last December, but the family were overjoyed to be reunited yesterday.

“It will be amazing to be home and to finally be a family again,” said a thrilled Yvonne.

She said her fun-loving toddler has become a completely different child since coming off most of his medications, which had left him constantly groggy along with a litany of

on most of his medications, which had left him constantly groggy along with a litany of side effects.

She said the boys are just thrilled to be home for Christmas and have even tipped off Santa about their change of address.

She said: "The boys are excited. It's the simple things, Oscar wants to sleep in his own bed. He has told Santa we're going to be in Ireland for Christmas so he knows where to go."

The Cork mother, along with a team of doctors in Colorado, had spent most of the year drafting a special legal application to the State to allow Tristan to become the first person in Ireland to legally take medical cannabis.

She said: "The medical professionals involved in Tristan's care have gone over and beyond for us. Tristan's application for medical cannabis is the first of its kind in Ireland's history as is the case that Tristan is the first person in Ireland's history to be legally allowed access medical cannabis.

"Now the blueprint is there for everyone else to follow. I hope it is perfected to make it a little easier to apply, but it is definitely a safe route to treatment."

Before they left to receive treatment in the Children's Hospital Colorado last December, Tristan had stopped talking and walking after going through a harrowing ordeal of relentless seizures.

Now his mother says he constantly sings his ABCs and counts on his fingers in both Irish and English.

Her biggest gift over the past year has seen her little son's fun-loving, joker personality for the first time since he emerged from a fog of medication.

Seizures in children with her son's condition can be life-threatening and result in paralysis or development delay in the brain, with children with Dravet having a much higher risk of sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (SUDE).

Yvonne said her son is "doing amazingly".

She said: "He has been seizure free for months and improving with his speech every week. His team are amazed by his constant progress.

"Tristan has had another reduction in his medications, but is still on two medications.

"We're happy with that considering he left Ireland on nine."

She is hoping her year-long journey will allow a blueprint for children like her son to get the medication which has transformed his life.

She said: "It has been a long journey, much of it lonely with highs and lows along the way.

“One thing that will always leave a mark in my heart, were the people who kept in touch, who constantly rang or messaged just to see how we were.

“I would like to see legislation for Medical Cannabis in Ireland that everyone is comfortable with.

“It can be done and we will continue to help make this happen.”

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