

We love
YOUR
QUICKIES!

Three cracking quick

CANNABIS SAVED MY GIRL



‘She’s dead,’ I sobbed. ‘She’s going to be dead by the time we get there.’

‘Facing to the hospital in the middle of the night with my cousin at the wheel, all I could think was, ‘I’ve lost my little girl.’

My beautiful daughter Ava has a severe form of epilepsy called Dravets Syndrome. She has dozens of seizures every day.

She’s six years old but so poor she can hardly talk and still wears nappies.

After a particularly bad run – she had suffered 18 massive seizures one after the other – Ava had been admitted to hospital.

After two days out, by her bedside, my husband Paul, 57, who’s a mechanic, had sent me home to get some rest.

I’d recently given birth to Ava’s little sister, Elwan-May, and I was shattered.

I needed to stick on the baby, as well as our two other children – Sophia, who’s five, and Michael, four.

HYSTERICAL CRYING

Don’t worry, love, I’ll hold her. I’ll stay with her and call you if there’s any change.’

But it wasn’t Paul waking me in the early hours. It was my cousin Pat barging in my window.

‘We’ve got to get to the hospital,’ he told me, grabbing my coat and bundling me into the car. ‘Ava is in intensive care. They told me to get you in as soon as possible.’

My mind was whirling. Why hadn’t Paul called me himself?

When we arrived I discovered the truth. Ava had suffered a massive heart attack. Her little body was unable to cope with all the seizures.

Doctors had shocked her heart to get it restarted.

It was horrifying seeing her on that bed, looking so tiny, surrounded by so many doctors. Paul was in hysterics crying.

Eventually the doctors got her seizures under control, and then we were back to counting. One hour without a seizure. Then two. Then three.

That’s what life has been like since Ava was a baby. Every time she slips into



Years with Ava (right) and Sophie

another seizure, we have no idea whether she’ll come out of it.

She had her first one when she was four months old. Her limbs went stiff and stiff, then she started shaking. It went on for 45 minutes.

Blood tests confirmed she had Dravets, a drug resistant form of epilepsy. It means there isn’t any medication they can give her to stop the seizures from happening.

ALWAYS ON WATCH

When Ava has a big seizure, she can be under for as long as two hours.

We have medication to give her that will help bring her out of it, but if that doesn’t work we have to call for an ambulance. We’re in Cook University Hospital most weeks.

Ann can also have dozens of smaller epileptic every day.

I will see her face fall or her eyes zone out and I say to Paul, ‘That’s it, she’s gone.’

We never leave her alone. At most she plays in the next room with the door ajar.

Paul and I take it in turns to keep watch overnight. One of us sleeps while the other sits with a wide monitor on our side of the bed.

Ava’s development has been profoundly delayed. Her speech is about the same level as her baby sister, who is nearly two. She attends a special school near Cork, where we live.

After her heart attack I couldn’t just do nothing, so I began doing my own research online. That’s when I found out about medicinal cannabis.

It seemed crazy. Most parents try to keep their kids away from cannabis, and yet here I was

considering giving it to my six-year-old daughter.

Determined to find out more, I went to a conference with several doctors from around the world.

I’d heard about a medicine called Charlotte’s Web which contains CBD, the medicinal part of the cannabis plant. It’s legal for use in the UK and Ireland, but it isn’t prescribed on the NHS.

By that point, I was willing to try anything.

I’ll never forget the first day I syringed a small amount into Ava’s mouth. It was such a nerve-racking moment.

TALKING AT LAST

During the first month we used Charlotte’s Web, she had seven seizures. Before the medication she could have seven in two hours!

She’s making eye contact, her balance is improving – she’s even started talking.

Now I’m campaigning for the Government to remove the laws on medicinal cannabis.

In other countries it’s legal to use a stronger derivative called THC. For patients with epilepsy and neurological conditions like Parkinson’s, I’d like that to be considered here.

At the minute, Ava is trapped inside her car, penned in by constant seizures. We just want to bring her out into the world. Vera Twomey, 34, Aghabullogue, Ireland

AS TOLD TO JADE BEECROFT



Dad Paul and Ava