

STATEMENT OF ALISON MYRDEN

I Alison Myrden, am applying for an exemption under s. 56(1) of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act S.C. 1996, c.19 (“CDSA”) from sections 4 and 7 of the CDSA to permit me to possess and grow psilocybin mushrooms for medicinal uses.

PERSONAL AND MEDICAL HISTORY

I was born on January 11, 1964 in Regina, Saskatchewan. I grew up in Oakville where I had an eventful childhood peppered with regular visits to the hospital for broken bones and other “clumsy” injuries. At the age of 10 or 11 my family first noticed that I had mobility issues. My dexterity was not the greatest and I had difficulty competing as a cheerleader due to balance issues. Despite the wobbles, we chalked it up to not being careful, and I tried my best not to be “clumsy.” It was not until I was 28 that I was formally diagnosed with Primary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis (PPMS) back to the age of under 10 years old. I have accepted this diagnosis and have attempted to manage this disease since then. What I did not realize at that time, was that this was only the beginning of my neurological health challenges.

In my early 20’s I was diagnosed with cluster migraines, which have been described clinically as ‘Excruciating pain that is generally situated in, behind or around one eye, but may radiate to other areas of your face, head and neck.’¹ It has also been described as ‘being stabbed repeatedly on one side of your face for an extended period of time.’ This is not an exaggeration. The pain is so debilitating and intense I cannot be still. The pain is sometimes referred to as “suicide headaches” because of its severity. Those of us who suffer from these headaches are often desperate for relief as they are utterly debilitating. These headaches caused me to go on permanent disability, and literally knock me off of my feet every time an episode strikes. Sometimes the pain to my face and head, behind the eyes, and to the cheeks, wakes me out of my sleep. There is no cure, only pain management and lifestyle changes that may reduce the frequency. In my case, psilocybin has helped tremendously.

¹ Cluster Headache: Symptoms <<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cluster-headache/symptoms-causes/syc-20352080>> accessed Sep 14, 2020

Despite receiving two tough diagnoses at the beginning of my adult life, I was and continue to be engaged with life to the best of my abilities. I worked as a Corrections Officer for 8 years and have done my very best not to be a burden on anyone. Having said that, my health complaints continued to mount.

For the last 34 years I have also suffered from Bilateral Trigeminal Neuralgia, which is a condition causing chronic and excruciating pain on both sides of my face, as well as facial tics caused by the pain. The trigeminal nerve is the source of the pain, and leads to eye pain that causes cluster migraines. Some sufferers describe it as getting electric shocks to the face. This condition “is one of the most characteristic and difficult to treat neuropathic pain conditions in patients with multiple sclerosis.”² It has caused me to suffer from severe facial pain, 24 hours a day for over 34 years and starts as soon as I am conscious in the mornings.

Due to the complexity of my medical conditions, I have had extensive contact with the health care sector, including considerable dealings with doctors, pharmacists, and holistic medicine practitioners. There is no cure for Multiple Sclerosis or Trigeminal Neuralgia. It is all about pain management, and symptom relief. I have been referred to multiple specialists for a variety of pain management techniques. None have yielded any long-lasting results. Multiple Sclerosis is degenerative, and I will slowly lose functionality over time, regardless of the medications I try.

As you can imagine, this triune of health setbacks has made my life painfully difficult. As previously mentioned, I do not want to be a burden to anyone, including our society, which is why it is critical for me to access medication free from the threat of persecution. It is my Human Right to be pain free, and I should not be discriminated against because conventional medical treatment has done little to ease my pain, and has instead increased my need for stronger narcotics, and negatively affected my quality of life.

I am not a drug abuser. As a retired Law Enforcement Officer I respect the law and take criminality very seriously. I have followed all health directives from my health care team and participated in the standard course of treatments. They have not worked. I did not arrive at taking cannabis and psilocybin because I want to get high. I take these medicines because they are the best treatment for my pain management. But before I speak to their benefits, it is important for me to outline the lengths I have gone to in order to manage my pain in a conventional and legal way.

² Di Stefano, G., Maarbjerg, S. & Truini, A. Trigeminal neuralgia secondary to multiple sclerosis: from the clinical picture to the treatment options. *J Headache Pain* 20, 20 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s10194-019-0969-0>

CONVENTIONAL MEDICAL TREATMENT

1995 was when I first started getting a sporadic stabbing pain on the left side of my face. This trigeminal neuralgia pain was controlled for a period of time with pharmaceutical pain inhibitors. First I tried a short course of Solumedrol intravenously that relieved the pain for a short period of time, but this eventually stopped working - and included side effects such as fluid retention, weight gain, headaches, and muscle weakness. I was then prescribed Prednisone which I tried many times over the decades. Terrible side effects included nausea, vomiting, heartburn, and horrible weight gain. By October of 1995 my pain was episodic, meaning, that it came and went in “waves” and was kept under control with Tylenol 3's on an as needed basis - my neurologist made it clear to me that my need for medications meant that I would not be addicted as they were necessary. These were also effective, but wreaked havoc on my stomach and caused severe nausea.

I have experienced many harmful side effects of taking pain inhibitors for an extended period of time. Aside from nausea, drowsiness, and dizziness, over time I have developed a tolerance to the prescribed pain inhibitors that eventually resulted in complete loss of efficacy, that in turn resulted in me being prescribed stronger drugs. To be frank, if I continued on the course of narcotics and pain inhibitors I was prescribed I would either be addicted or dead. Psilocybin and cannabis saved my life!

Few drugs have been able to curb the pain caused by my trigeminal nerve, nor have I had long-lasting pain relief. Generally speaking, after a period of time of being on one pain inhibiting medication, my body develops an increased tolerance and its effectiveness wears off. As such, I would have to increase my dosage for the medication to have any effect. It became a very depressing cycle of repeatedly returning to the doctor to either have my dosage increased or being put on a stronger medication.

In order to manage my symptoms, I have been prescribed nearly every pharmaceutical drug available in Canada for cluster headaches and trigeminal nerve pain. Medications prescribed specifically for managing pain included: Nabilone, Sativex, Gabapentin, Carbamazepine, Meloxicam, Duragesic Patch (75 mcg), Oxycontin, Demerol (50 mg tablets x 10/day), and Stadol Nasal Spray (1mg x 3 to 5 sprays).

In addition to my pain management medication, I have also taken anti-spasm, and anti-depressant medications that include: Dantrium (25 mg); Tegretol (at peak dosage 200 mg x 3/day); Xyban (for smoking cessation); Dormpridone; Dilantin (500mg/day on account of the breakthrough pain) and Baclofen. Common side effects of muscle relaxers, are low energy, and drowsiness. While certain muscle relaxants were able to reduce my pain somewhat, I lost the ability to stand and walk, due to the drowsiness they caused. Why do I have to choose between being pain free and living in my wheel chair permanently? Is

my right to life, liberty and personal security not of equal value to that of other Canadians?

When I was at my worst point of conventional pain management, I was taking a combination of 32 different pills per day, and over 2000 mg of Morphine to control my pain and spasms. When I am on that many pharmaceutical medications, I am nailed to my wheelchair. I am overcome by negative side effects that include nausea, dizziness, vomiting, and weight loss. These side effects are so severe I require a caregiver because I am unable to take care of myself, which is emotionally devastating for me. I cannot stress enough how important it is for me to be independent and to live without pain.

In addition to completely incapacitating me, the side effects of many of these pharmaceutical medications require *more* medications to cope with the symptoms: anti-nausea medications like Rabeprazole; stool softeners like Soffax; and Vesicare for incontinence. These pharmaceutical cocktails have been assaulting my body and slowly poisoning my mental health and joie de vivre.

Currently I am taking just three forms of prescription medication, including Dilaudid prescribed at 10 8 mg tablets every 6 hours, Prochlorperazine, for nausea, migraines, and anxiety, prescribed at 1-2 5 mg tablets every 4-6 hours, and Ketorolac (PRN) prescribed at 1-2 10 mg tablets every 6 hours as required. These three medications are specifically for controlling the pain in my head and face. I take these medications because they work effectively at controlling my pain, and I am able to manage the side effects.

Every medication that I have been prescribed has lost its effectiveness after a time. This has caused my medical team to repeatedly increase my dosages. Eventually I got to the point that I could no longer manage that pattern. I felt that the increased dosages were killing me and that I was a human lab rat: caged-in by my side effects. This is why I decided to supplement my prescriptions with natural remedies like psilocybin and cannabis, and have found this to be the most effective strategy for managing my symptoms. When I first came out to the media about my plight I was taking 32 pills a day and 2000 mg of morphine, along with doctor authorized heroin and cocaine for a period of years as needed or required.

EXPERIENCES WITH CANNABIS, TRADITIONAL HEALTH CARE AND OTHER NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

I was one of the first medically authorized patients to consume cannabis with medical knowledge of its efficacy back in March 1994. Before I received authorization to use cannabis, I had to take all the drugs that the medical pharmacopeia (Compendium of

Pharmaceuticals and Specialties here in Canada) recommended for my ailments. But I knew immediately that cannabis was the best thing I could find for my pain. When I first discovered cannabis I was pain free for almost 24 hours after one Cannabis cigarette! As you can well imagine this discovery changed my life and improved my pain management significantly, and eventually led to my medical team over-seeing my cannabis usage as true medicine.

Once I discovered that cannabis could help counteract the negative side effects brought on by my neuropathic pain medication it became a staple in my pain management routine. I am grateful to have made this discovery because my quality of life was being impacted so severely that doctors visits became part of my daily routine and I could hardly recognize myself.

I was the first person to be prescribed Sativex Nasal Spray (a cannabis drug - 5 mg as needed) for breakthrough pain in Canada, unfortunately I got little relief with up to 50 sprays a day and started to get sores on the inside of my cheeks and tongue. Ultimately I got longer lasting relief from smoking or ingesting cannabis.

Dr. John Erik Paulseth my amazing neurologist who, sadly for me, recently retired, was the first to authorize me cannabis for my nerve pain in 1994. The *Medical Marijuana Access Regulations* (MMAR) program allowed patients to grow their own through a designated grower.

I consume cannabis regularly, in the form of rolled joints as well as in edibles, oils, and other concentrated forms. My authorization is as high as it is due to the severity of my medical conditions and the forms of my consumption. It's important to note that cannabis oils and edibles require significantly more dried cannabis flower to produce. I require approximately 20 times the amount of dried cannabis flower to convert into oils, edibles and other concentrated forms.

My initial authorization for cannabis was 28 grams/day in 1994. This dosage has increased over time and is currently 150 grams/day. My general practitioner, supports my current authorization amount and helped me to fill out the government paperwork from 1995 onwards.

I have continued to legally use cannabis for over 25 years and I now smoke on average 20 one and a half gram cannabis cigarettes and use oil every day, generally twice per hour from the moment I wake up. I will also vaporize my cannabis, drink it in tea and eat as many cannabis cookies and edibles that I can in a twenty-four hour period. Depending on the strain, I can have a lot or very little respite, as so few strains give me any break from the excruciating pain I live

with. My pain has increased dramatically over the last ten years and so has my cannabis use which is essential as part of my own harm-reduction strategy.

I realized that when I lowered my use of pharmaceutical pills over the last 30 plus years and increased my use of cannabis, I was in less pain. This has been a great harm reduction discovery for me - it is how I have managed to lower my dosage of pain medications. I receive calls from people all over the world who have followed my medication use in order to reduce their consumption and reliance on conventional drug therapies, and I am proud of the fact that people have reduced their reliance on drugs on account of my treatment plan.

Like other pain medications, the effectiveness of cannabis can wear off, which is why I require multiple strains and varieties to avoid increasing my tolerance level to one specific strain. Fortunately, the side effects of cannabis are not nearly as bad as some of the experiences I have had on other pharmaceutical pain relievers.

When I have cannabis with my pills, some days I get a 5/10 relief and some days I don't get relief at all without taking strong opiates that have lasting and detrimental side effects. The biggest thing that cannabis helps with, is to lessen my reliance on pharmaceutical medications, which have destroyed my stomach and caused extreme weight gain to name but a few of the side-effects.

The opiates I take suppress my breathing, and are causing me to lose my voice. I don't want to take these pills at all. Because of this side effect, I would rather eat cannabis edibles than smoke cannabis. I have friends who bake cannabis oil into edibles for me, which is the best option. Sometimes however, I cannot wait and I need to smoke something for immediate pain relief.

I will either smoke or eat cannabis throughout the day. I hardly sleep anymore but when I do now, the pain starts again from the moment I am conscious. This is one of the symptoms of MS - not being able to get into a deep sleep.

Cannabis can help me to sleep 6-8 hours at a time if I take enough. Combining cannabis with psilocybin, allows me to live as pain free as possible and limits my need of other pain killers. I would prefer to use this natural pain reliever, as it has been the most effective way of managing my daily pain, with the least amount of side effects.

Using psilocybin in addition to cannabis, has proven to give me lasting pain relief, on a level that I had previously been unable to attain through traditional pharmaceutical solutions. This is amazing for me and that correlates directly to my use of psychedelics and cannabis.

As I increased my cannabis use, I noticed my conventional pills were needed less and less. I was not taking 32 pills a day and up to 2000 milligrams of morphine daily for relief anymore. By 2004 I found I was getting relief from all of my symptoms for MS with copious amounts of cannabis and other natural substances like high quality fatty acids, vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants. I no longer required all of those pharmaceuticals. After over twenty years of following this regime life was becoming more bearable, and I was engaging with the world thanks to the synergistic effects of the natural substances, cannabis and psilocybin. I am blessed with a never give up attitude, which is why I am able to walk with a cane for balance (over short distances), though most days I use my electric wheelchair for long distances or big city blocks while I am out and about.

In April 1998 I tried Acupuncture with some relief the first time but no relief at all after the second treatment.

EXPERIENCES WITH PSILOCYBIN

My neurologist medically sanctioned the use of psilocybin for alternative pain relief (the world's first Medical Authorization for Psilocybin for excruciating pain) since April 3, 2017. He was aware that I could not get it anywhere legally. He wants me to be protected, and that me and my medicine provider not be at risk of criminal persecution. I became interested in psilocybin after I had tried it to address the pain in my face and head (over 30 years ago) and experienced very positive effects related to my symptoms when I increased my dosage. When I increased my dosage to 5 grams at a time I was completely pain free for almost five hours! Psilocybin helped me to "forget" by distracting me from many of my pain symptoms and relieved me from the challenges of battling MS, living in excruciating pain and the myriad of health problems that come with being in a wheelchair.

From my consumption of one to two grams of raw dried psilocybin, in tea and chocolate over 30 years ago as needed, my needs have now changed to five grams of dried Psilocybin every two hours, every time I can afford it.

I have access to a consistent supply for some time, though recently my supply of both medicines have gone dry. I require a consistent dose of 50 grams over the course of each day (24 hours). My partner bakes the mushrooms into brownies or makes me tea for me to consume. These are the most effective methods for managing my pain. I have never tried growing mushrooms on my own, and I do not know where to find a legal source.

From a pharmaceutical perspective, I need regular access to psilocybin for it to provide any relief. With the proper dose, I can be pain free for up to 5 hours, per dose. This is absolutely amazing!

Side effects from psilocybin include nausea, but it is brief and will only last a few minutes. It is manageable in comparison to the side effects caused by other medications that I have taken. I use cannabis to help counteract these temporary side effects. Cannabis has always helped control nausea.

It is my understanding that psilocybin has the same effect on the brain as traditional tryptamines (compound in psilocybin) used to help migraine pain and cluster headaches. They work by targeting the same serotonin receptors. The difference being that psilocybin also targets psychedelic ones.

Cluster headaches cause excruciating and debilitating pain. The traditional pharmaceutical drugs for treating cluster headaches, are Triptans like Imitrex and Naproxen. Prednisone is another common drug that is prescribed. I have tried Naproxen before, as well as Prednisone and Imitrex and found that all of them have strong side effects of dizziness, nausea and immense weight-gain.

I have done substantial research about the condition, and connect and share information globally with others who cluster headache sufferers. These survivors and their sometimes non-traditional pain-relief methods, are known as “cluster busters.” Some have found relief through hallucinogenic doses of tryptamines, such as psilocybin. They have been known to “break the cycle” and end cluster headaches in one-third of these survivors. Everyone is different, but some have reported an immediate sense of relief, with pain returning slowly after a few days. This pain relief is faster than conventional medication and the side effects include having the giggles and an upset stomach.

Psilocybin, is a “serotonin agonist” which exists and occurs naturally. Drugs like Sumatriptan, have been engineered to target the same receptors that Psilocybin does naturally. In theory, they work the same way, by constricting the blood vessels in the brain to relieve pain.

When I wake up in the morning, the pain in my face comes back at full force. Each day, I consume psilocybin and I document it. I keep track of my feelings, my health, and how I feel before, during and after ingesting the mushrooms.

I chart when my pain goes from a 10 plus, and back to a zero, and I record my pain every time I increase my dosage. Eventually my pain cycles back to requiring 50 grams of psilocybin. I have been carefully recording how this is affecting my health as I do not want anyone else to suffer as I do. I think that it’s important for me to share my best practices to reduce the harm conventional treatment can wreak on sufferers and their families.

I have benefitted from cannabis, psilocybin and other non-pharmacological approaches to ameliorating my MS symptoms. I now take many nutraceuticals as part of my daily routine including Evening Primrose Oil (Omega 6 Essential Fatty Acid) with Cod Liver Oil (Omega 3 Essential Fatty Acid), where the ratio is always 3:1 (Omega 6 to Omega 3). Scientists have told me that these will benefit any chronic illness.

I also take 20,000 IU's of Vitamin D3 per day. (5,000 IU's, four times a day), in addition to an Anti-Oxidant called "PROVEX CV" (cardio/vascular) from the Doctor who recommended "aspirin a day" decades ago – Dr. John Foltz. I buy a lot of these vitamins at my local Health Food Store and online. I also take multi-vitamins, calcium/magnesium, and folic acid.

ACCESSING PSILOCYBIN

Psilocybin does not grow in the wild and I am not a mycologist. Due to the risk associated with accessing psilocybin on the street market, I am seeking a s. 7 exemption in order to grow this medicine myself.

CONCERNING DELIVERY OF CARE

I am a medical patient who has been treated legally with medical cannabis for over twenty years. Over the years my certified cannabis growers have been targeted repeatedly by the RCMP and OPP who have destroyed my medicine, this has forced me to use harmful conventional treatments when my medicine is not available.

I wish to have my medical care delivered in a form that is personal, knowledgeable, and respectful. I feel well cared for by my doctors and by my pharmacists, and I wish to receive medical cannabis and psilocybin in a similar atmosphere. This is a Human Rights matter, these onerous and draconian drug laws must be lifted so that I can enjoy a decent quality of life. Right now I am living under state sanctioned torture.

Similarly, I wish to receive state authorization to use Psilocybin from a pharmaceutical perspective. My hope is to be able to access mushrooms that contain the natural psilocybin compound, without fear of criminal prosecution for myself and for compassionate growers who grow on my behalf.

I obtain all of my prescription medication at the local Shoppers Drug Mart, which I have used for over 20 years. The staff and pharmacists there are very professional and understand my needs. They are aware of my conditions and my history. Due to the complexity of my medical conditions, I am under the care of doctors and pharmacists,

which includes regular adjustments to my medication and prescriptions. This circle of care should continue to include psilocybin and cannabis in order to complement my conventional treatment and in order to continue to facilitate an overall harm reduction strategy.

I have had many bad experiences, and continue to suffer the physical consequences of taking traditional pharmaceutical medication - these drugs destroy my body and are ineffectual. I know this because I have never been pain free without the addition of natural remedies into my ordinary medical routine. I am best able to control the side effects of my traditional drug regime using cannabis, which has been the most effective method of controlling nausea. Cannabis has made day-to-day living easier.

THE FUTURE OF MY HEALTH

The combination of cannabis and psilocybin provides me with the most pain relief for the longest period of time. These organic earth derived organisms, are the best treatments for me and help me to feel like myself again.

Using my current pain management prescriptions without psilocybin, has me nailed to my bed: I physically cannot get out of bed. It has also accelerated my MS progression, and I am now on my third wheelchair. I don't want to be horizontal all the time, I want to get up sometimes. With the use of psilocybin, I can get up and walk around and care for myself in ways that I was previously unable to. The psilocybin is necessary for me to enjoy a normal quality of life.

I am proud to say that I no longer use any anti-spasmodic medications since I am able to control my muscle spasms with the use of cannabis and psilocybin. Psilocybin and cannabis have been instrumental in reducing the harm conventional medical treatment has wreaked on my body and life. Psilocybin is necessary for me to have a tolerable quality of life with a degenerative disease and neurological pain disorder.

I have the full support of my medical team and would like autonomy over my health and wellbeing. I would like to live a pain free life on my terms and help reduce the harm caused by society's fear of natural therapies. No one deserves to suffer, especially when there are proven alternatives. Please respect my human right to security over my personhood.

Alison Myrden

Retired Law Enforcement Officer
Global Drug Law Reform Activist
Federal Medical Cannabis Exemptee in Canada since 1994
Canadian Patient Representative for the IACM
International Association for Cannabinoid Medicines