



COURTESY PHOTO

Amy Breault with her daughter Arianna

Why some patients go to Russia for treatment

By Kristin Erikson Barton

Ever since the time when Amy Breault, of Pembroke, Massachusetts, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis at the age of 17, her health had been going downhill. She became legally blind and was losing her ability to walk. In addition to her medications that had to be regularly injected, her neurologist began using chemotherapy to try to slow the progression of the disease.

"No treatment seemed to work for me," said Breault, 35, who is the mother to 5-year-old daughter Arianna. "It was only a matter of time before things started to get even worse."

That's when Breault found out about a stem cell treatment that has not been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration – but is available in Moscow, at the National Pirogov Medical Surgical Center

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Пенсионеры сидели без отопления

Русскоговорящие пенсионеры около двух месяцев сидели без отопления вследствие взрывов и пожаров в городе Андовер на севере от Бостона.

Музыкант Аркадий Белицкий, 71, рассказал, что газ им дали только в начале ноября - почти через два месяца после аварии. Нагревали помещение

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Шоколад с лечебной коноплей

Русскоговорящие поставляют новый товар в русские магазины

Автор: Юлия Масис

Они сидят на обыкновенном диване, только, точнее, не сидят, а раскачиваются, потому что диван не касается пола. Этот диван в виде качелей, они подвесили его над землей. С потолка свисает шар с буграми - планета маленького принца, объясняют они. На деревянном столике, похожем на сцену из кукольного театра, стоит пластиковый череп и коробочка с фиолетовым песком. Стульев здесь почти нет, зато есть четыре гамака. На стене изображен синий осьминог с человеческими глазами, и кажется, что он будет светиться, если выключат свет. Выход на улицу по темной лестнице, на стоянке асфальт разбит, нужно смотреть под ноги, чтобы не попасть в лужу. То, что хозяева этого необычного офиса на окраине Бостона - иммигранты из бывшего СССР, можно угадать потому, что в одном из углов зала можно вскипятить воду для чая.

Им по сорок с чем-то лет, в прошлом дизайнеры видеоигр, программисты. Но недавно они основали компанию Evva (что означает "травя" по-португальски) по производству шоколада, меда и оливкового масла с экстрактом конопли - каннабидиолом или CBD. (Каннабидиол сделан из сорта конопли, в котором психотропные вещества отсутствуют - то есть он не дает кайфового эффекта



ФОТО ЮЛИИ МАСИС

Миша Золотницкий из компании "Evva" с банкой конопли (хемп)

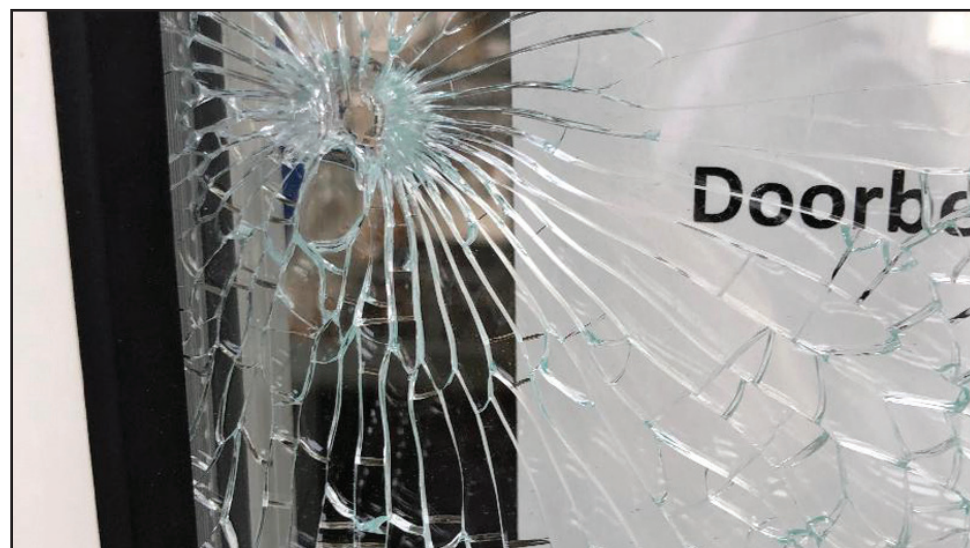
как марихуана, но имеет медицинские качества.) В ноябре они завезли эти шоколадки в русский магазин "Базар" в Аллстоне и во Фраммингхаме, собираются в скором времени снабдить все русские магазины Бостона, - просто сейчас еще не хватает товара.

"Я просыпаюсь каждое утро, и я не знаю, что будет через пять минут потому что очень много проектов", - говорит Миша

Золотницкий, 45 - один из партнеров по бизнесу. Одет он в шаровары - одна штанина синяя, другая черная. Родился в Санкт-Петербурге, переехал в Америку в 16 лет, начал курить траву в 22, последний раз, когда он работал на кого-то, это было в планетарии, где он отвечал за спец-эффекты.

Его друг Даниэль Айриян, 46, тоже

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18 ноября кто-то пробил стекло в синагоге в городе Пибоди, на севере от Бостона, выстрелом из пневматического пистолета

Некоторые хотят уехать от антисемитизма

Автор: Юлия Масис

После стрельбы в синагоге некоторые русскоговорящие семьи задумались о том, чтобы опять куда-то уехать - подальше от антисемитизма.

Ирина Бастрыкина, которая живет с мужем и восьмилетней дочерью в Вестборо, рассматривает переезд в Израиль на постоянное место жительства. Они с мужем собираются съездить туда летом, чтобы присмотреться.

"После стрельбы в синагоге в
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Treatment in Russia

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with Dr. Denis Fedorenko.

Breault's former partner found Dr. Fedorenko's name on Facebook groups, blogs and news stories online. After sharing a video of her walking with Dr. Fedorenko, Breault was informed that she met the clinical criteria for the treatment and flew to Russia in September 2016. She raised more than \$50,000 to pay for this treatment out of pocket.

"I actually had hope for the first time since my diagnosis," Breault said.

Breault is not the only American patient with multiple sclerosis who recently traveled to Russia for this procedure, called "autologous hematopoietic stem cell transplantation" (HSCT). This treatment attempts to "reboot" the immune system and offer those with MS and other autoimmune diseases a shot at a symptom-free life.

Dr. Fedorenko and his team at the National Pirogov Medical Surgical Center's A.A. Maximov Department of Hematology and Cellular Therapy are among the leading experts in HSCT. Since 2005, more than 900 individuals with autoimmune diseases from across the world have traveled there to receive treatment, according to Anastasia Panchenko, department administrator of the A.A. Maximov Department of Hematology and Cellular Therapy.

"We have provided lots of research since 1999 and we have big experience and specialists," said Panchenko in an email to the Russian Boston Gazette.

In individuals with MS, the immune system attacks the central nervous system — which controls the brain, eyes, and spinal cord — for no apparent reason. This can cause a multitude of symptoms that come and go — and worsen — over time.

According to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, HSCT uses chemotherapy drugs to essentially weaken and turn off the immune system. Prior to chemotherapy, the person's hematopoietic stem cells are taken from their blood or bone marrow and stored for later use. When the time is right, the stored hematopoietic stem cells are injected back into the person's body and help to build a new immune system that is hopefully disease-free.

For Breault, the results after HSCT were almost immediate.

"My tremors stopped," said Breault, who stayed in Russia for approximately one month for the treatment. "I wasn't shaky anymore. It was the best thing ever."

Now, Breault is experiencing the independence she once had before her MS diagnosis. While she still needs some medical assistance, she was able to move out of her parents' home and live on her own with her daughter. She has come off all her medications. While still legally blind, her eyesight is improving and she can now see

highway signs and read the back of a cereal box. She exercises several times a week and continues to see her neurologist every few months.

"After this procedure, I don't need a thing," said Breault. "I feel more determined than ever."

In the United States, clinical trials are still underway to validate HSCT's effectiveness. While HSCT is available at many U.S. medical centers as a common treatment for specific types of cancers, "it is up to the discretion of the provider and the facility they practice at to offer this treatment to people with MS," said Eileen Curran, senior director of Communications and Public Relations at the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

"HSCT treatment is promising, but there still aren't enough rigorous clinical studies on it to weigh the real risks and benefits," said Bruce Bebo, PhD, executive vice president at the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, in a statement.

"The Society is supportive of individuals considering HSCT if they have aggressive MS that isn't responding to other types of MS treatments. The challenge is that insurance companies still consider this to be experimental and so it's not easy to get it covered. That's why people are choosing to go abroad where the treatment is less expensive."

The out-of-pocket cost for this treatment in the United States is an estimated

\$125,000 per person, according to a 2015 Healthline article; whereas, countries like Russia offer this treatment for less than half that price. It is unclear how many people from the United States travel overseas for this treatment, said Curran.

The Russian Boston Gazette found several such individuals in New England.

For example, former basketball player Greg Friel, 39, from New Hampshire also raised \$100,000 online to travel to Russia for the procedure a year ago. He was on a waiting list for more than three years, and was already in a wheelchair by the time he flew to Russia in Sept. of 2017. It is not clear if the procedure was successful, since Friel could not be reached for comment for this story.

Despite the barriers to receiving HSCT, there are many inspirational online stories of hope told by those who received this treatment.

When asked to share words of wisdom with other people with MS, Breault said, "So many times, I wanted to give up, but just don't. Don't. There has to be a light at the end of the tunnel."

To learn more about the treatment, visit National Pirogov Medical Surgical Center's A.A. Maximov Department of Hematology and Cellular Therapy <http://msclerosis.ru/eng.php>



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