Today’s piece was prepared by Rachel Pearson, MD, from a Fox News story titled [Marijuana extract may help treat severe epilepsy, new studies show](http://www.foxnews.com/health/2016/12/08/marijuana-extract-may-help-treat-severe-epilepsy-new-studies-show.html)

This article describes positive results from two recent placebo-controlled trials of cannabidiol (CBD) as a treatment for seizures associated with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome and Dravet syndrome. As the article mentions, both studies were funded by the pharmaceutical company that is manufacturing pharmaceutical CBD extract as the drug Epidiolex. Neither study has yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal. Epidolex has not been approved by the FDA.

The article itself is fairly balanced, but the headline and associated picture are concerning. “Marijuana extract may help treat severe epilepsy, new studies show,” is accompanied by a picture of marijuana buds poured over a prescription pad. The most obvious concern is that parents of children with epilepsy would be encouraged to expose their kids to consumer-grade marijuana, particularly because Epidiolex is not available as a prescription. Furthermore, it’s important to note that the kids who have been studied don’t simply have epilepsy, but have severe, medically intractable epilepsy syndromes. All the kids in the studies continued taking their prescription medications in addition to the CBD. Whereas the studies purportedly show limited side effects with the use of CBD alone, use of marijuana can have significant and unpredictable side effects, and can adversely affect kids’ neurodevelopment. Exposing children to marijuana can also put vulnerable families at risk for legal action.

The article does not include statements from or pictures of any patients or parents. In fact, the research on CBD was advanced thanks to years of advocacy from patients and parents dealing with epilepsy, organized through the Epilepsy Foundation. Their life stories—and the acuity of their need for better therapies—are the missing pieces that would put this research in context.

Parents who want to learn more about epilepsy and new research in the field could be referred to the following:

**RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES ON EPILEPSY AND RESEARCH:**

[The Epilepsy Foundation](http://www.epilepsy.com)

[NINDS](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/epilepsy/epilepsy.htm#What_research_is_being_done) *The NIH’s Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke has a long list of resources for patients and caregivers*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!