

# SEIZED

INSIDE THE MYSTERY OF EPILEPSY

## PBS TO AIR 'SEIZED: Inside the Mystery of Epilepsy'

Premieres May 6, 2016 on PBS (check local listings or watch online)

(SAN FRANCISCO, CA) – April 27, 2016 – **SEIZED: Inside the Mystery of Epilepsy** tells powerful, intimate stories of patients, families and doctors pioneering new treatments for one of the world's oldest and most mysterious diseases – a disease that even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is often kept secret and carries great stigma.

*"I must say I have never seen a film so passionate, so real, so powerful and so intimate – and above all comprehensive – on the subject of epilepsy and its impact on the lives of families. This film must be seen by audiences all across America..."*

*Dr. Andrew Cole, Massachusetts General Hospital*

Three million Americans have epilepsy. It affects more people than brain tumors, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and cerebral palsy combined. Striking the organ most responsible for our very humanity – the brain – it can cause terrifying and disabling seizures that come without warning, at any time, in many different forms. For almost one third of all patients, epilepsy is uncontrollable, unremitting, and all consuming. And even as doctors and patients push the frontiers of treatment forward, a fundamental question remains – what causes epilepsy?

**SEIZED: Inside the Mystery of Epilepsy** follows the personal struggles of four individuals and their families as they face the huge challenges of living with epilepsy and courageously search for new treatments. The one-hour documentary also features leaders in epilepsy research, including: Dr. Orrin Devinsky, Director of the NYU Langone Epilepsy Center; Dr. Robert Finkelstein, Program Director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke; and Dr. Karen Parko, neurologist, San Francisco VA Medical Center.

In the special, we meet Ouida, a young mother, who is taking a chance on a radical new surgery – a smart device that will be implanted in her brain to detect and control seizure activity. We follow Caitlin and Lili, young women who both have severe forms of epilepsy that developed in their first years of life, but see different results from a controversial new treatment involving an extract from medical marijuana. We also meet Andy, who had a massive, violent seizure after serving in the Army in Afghanistan. Andy's doctor suspects that a blast he experienced during his deployment in Afghanistan caused traumatic brain injury, which led to post-traumatic epilepsy. Researchers believe that Andy's case offers promising new insights into one of the root causes of epilepsy.

Enlightening and emotional, **SEIZED: Inside the Mystery of Epilepsy** brings epilepsy out of secrecy and into a new era of hope and understanding.

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**SEIZED: Inside the Mystery of Epilepsy** is a production of Partisan Pictures, produced by Peter Schnall and Elizabeth Arledge, and is being presented on PBS by KQED in San Francisco. Funding for this program was provided by The Pollner Family and The Thorpe Family.

**FAMILIES/INDIVIDUALS Local Stories:** Many northern California families and veterans are actively living with epilepsy. Their stories serve as a local foundation for this movie and can bring home the important message about fighting the stigma, fear and misunderstanding so pervasive in our community. If interested in in-person interviews, please contact either the Epilepsy Foundation or VA Epilepsy Centers of Excellence.

**About Partisan Pictures:** Founded by seven-time Emmy-winning producer and cinematographer Peter Schnall, Partisan Pictures is a pioneer in documentary film and television, with a reputation for producing insightful films – true stories distinguished by humanity, intrigue and integrity...and the highest network ratings. Partisan Pictures has produced for the most respected non-fiction networks in television, including PBS, History Channel, Discovery, and National Geographic Channel. From adventure and intrigue to science and history, Partisan Pictures brings big screen, cinematic technique to the small screen to create a visceral experience that connects audiences with the world. More information at [partisanpictures.com](http://partisanpictures.com).

**About Epilepsy Foundation of Northern California (EFNC):** Founded in 1953, the Epilepsy Foundation of Northern California (EFNC) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization leading the fight to stop seizures, find a cure and overcome the challenges created by epilepsy. EFNC is dedicated to providing information, resources and support to the over 140,000 Northern Californians living with epilepsy. Our goal is to ensure that people with seizures are able to participate in all life experiences, to improve how the community views epilepsy, and to dispel myths about this condition by providing information through training, events, and programs. EFNC serves 44 counties from the Fresno County to Monterey to the Oregon border. One in 26 people experience a seizure in their lifetime. [www.epilepsynorcal.org](http://www.epilepsynorcal.org).

**About VA Centers of Excellence:** The **San Francisco VA Health Care System** is a comprehensive network that provides health services to Veterans through the San Francisco VA Medical Center (SFVAMC) and six community-based outpatient clinics in Santa Rosa, Eureka, Ukiah, Clearlake, San Bruno and downtown San Francisco. It has a long history of conducting cutting edge research, establishing innovative medical programs, and providing compassionate care to Veterans. SFVAMC has several National Centers of Excellence in the areas of Epilepsy Treatment; Cardiac Surgery; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; HIV; and Renal Dialysis.

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**CONTACT:**

Jody Iorns, Epilepsy Foundation of Northern CA  
415-677-4011 [jody@epilepsynorcal.org](mailto:jody@epilepsynorcal.org)

Matthew Coulson, San Francisco VA Health Care System  
415-750-2275, [matthew.coulson@va.gov](mailto:matthew.coulson@va.gov)

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