

Dr. Brian Smith got interested in medicine later in life (though not that late—being only 31). Having initially studied electrical engineering, immediately after graduating, he joined the Peace Corps in Guatemala, where he served two full terms. After finishing his service, he bought a piece of land in the town of Chisec, Alta Verapaz, where he'd worked. His plan was: go back to the States for to study medicine, return to Chisec in between semesters to help build a clinic there.

Back in the U.S., he applied to medical schools well-known for their rural medicine curricula. He decided on Quillen College of Medicine at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee. After graduating in 2012, he then applied to UNM for his Family Medicine residency—UNM being another program known and renowned for its rural medicine programs.

After finishing his last years of residency in Santa Fe, he decided to remain in the City Different.

Nowadays, when he's not delivering babies or approving medical marijuana licenses, he travels to Guatemala, usually every month, to treat patients in the Chisec—in the clinic he built (along with the help of other physicians and locals from Alta Verapaz) and then named, "China Us li Amaq'ink," which is Maya Qeqchi for "Beautiful is Life." (See their website at: www.chilainc.org.)

Now a physician at a hospital and local clinic in Santa Fe, Dr. Smith believes just as much in alternative medicine as Western medicine, and sees as many benefits for patients in medical cannabis as he does in his Western medicine practices.

"Not every patient is the same and a lot of the recommendations and protocol that we're told to follow don't fit every patient's needs," says Dr. Smith. "All patients should have access to both pharmaceutical and herbal medicines—including medical cannabis—and places like Kure Wellness provide access based on approved diagnoses as provided by the Department of Health of the State of New Mexico for certain patient populations.

"People understand," he continues, "that as far as whatever diagnoses and trauma they've endured in life, we're prepared for them here the moment they walk in the door. We're prepared, knowing that often patients have completed trials of standard Western Medicine treatment—and failed—and are simply searching for relief, quality of life and healing. We're ready to listen. We're not here to coach and counsel and classify patients based on diagnoses. It's a listening experience."

"It's about establishing a relationship with the patients," adds Dr. Smith. "Getting to know them, and getting to know what works for them."

Plus, Dr. Smith and the staff at Kure have a similar sense of humor. "There's some pretty important people here who've done important work, but they don't take themselves too seriously," says the good doctor with a smile—and a not-so-unimportant team member himself. "We all work as a team. Whether it's the doctor or the people up front when you first come in or our Kurators. Or the owner. Everyone here seems to be on equal footing. That's important for us, and for our patients as well."