

ROLE MODEL

Jim Abrahams: Super Dad

Filmmaker Jim Abrahams is known for slapstick comedies such as *Airplane!* and *The Naked Gun*, but few know of his family's real-life drama.



Just after his first birthday, Abrahams's son Charlie began having seizures. Following his diagnosis with epilepsy, Charlie saw numerous pediatric neurologists, tried various drug combinations and even had brain surgery, but he continued to

get worse. There was no help in sight.

Then Abrahams's research led him to the ketogenic diet, a high-fat food plan used in the treatment of children with hard-to-control seizures. Although the strict diet doesn't work for everyone, it made a difference in Charlie's life. "He went from having 100 seizures a day to having none after 48 hours on the diet," Abrahams says. Charlie stayed on the diet for four years. Now 15, he has been seizure-free for 10 years.

In 1994 Abrahams founded The Charlie Foundation to help other children with epilepsy who might benefit from the plan. Today he and Charlie promote the program worldwide. —Emily Soares

Read more Role Model interviews at www.EpilepsyAdvocate.com.

KEY TERMS

Doctors Defined

Match each type of specialist with its definition at right.

1. Neurologist

A. A doctor who performs surgery on the nervous system, including the brain

2. Epileptologist

B. A doctor who specializes in diseases of the nervous system by studying tissue under a microscope

3. Neuroradiologist

C. A physician who diagnoses and treats nervous-system disorders

4. Neurosurgeon

D. A licensed psychologist who studies the relationship between behavior and brain function

5. Neuropathologist

E. A physician who uses scanning devices to interpret images of the brain

6. Neuropsychologist

F. A neurologist with specialized training in the treatment of epilepsy

ANSWERS: 1. C 2. F 3. E 4. A 5. B 6. D

**ASK AN ADVOCATE**

Advice corner

Epilepsy Advocate Chris M. is a pastor, author, sports coach and father of three sons. He admits that having epilepsy—which he developed while recovering from encephalitis—poses personal challenges. But he believes his condition has also given him new insight into life, which he shares on www.chrismaxwellweb.com.

Q: My teenage son has epilepsy. He thinks I'm too protective. I'm afraid he'll have a seizure and get hurt. How much freedom should I allow him?

Chris: Great question! Here are a few key things to keep in mind:

- People with epilepsy have the same needs, desires and hopes as everyone else. Encourage your son's dreams. Be his coach, fan and teammate all in one.
- Realize it's okay to agree to disagree. Those moments can, if handled with gentle love, make your relationship even stronger.
- Although difficult, giving your son some independence may help him learn and develop without feeling trapped.

To learn more about Chris and other Epilepsy Advocates and to hear their inspiring stories, visit www.EpilepsyAdvocate.com.