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## ASPMN®'s Statement Regarding Misuse and Abuse of Opioids

There has been much attention paid by healthcare professionals, healthcare organizations, and policy makers around the serious public health problem of misuse, abuse, addiction and overdose of prescription opioid painkillers. There is a strong desire by all involved to eliminate this problem to prevent further loss of life.

These efforts must not do more harm than good. It is important when you attempt to solve a problem that you identify the real causes, and eliminate fixes that are based on unsubstantiated claims or hypotheticals. While we understand it is easy to target an inanimate medication and demonize it, we always must ask whether that will really fix the problem or just make us feel good. If we say we have done something (even if that something does not address the problem head on) are we really doing the best thing that we can?

When we seek to eliminate one medication that has the ability to relieve pain and suffering in pain patients, who does that help? If an FDA approved treatment is available where other medications have proved inadequate, unsuccessful, or concerns of liver toxicity exists because of the inclusion of acetaminophen in some medications, shouldn't that option be available?

All Schedule II controlled substances are subject to Drug Enforcement Agency prescribing restrictions. Before any pain medication is banned, many questions should be asked such as – Is it more or less potent than other medications currently on the market? Will this new medication significantly change overall prescribing and use by patients suffering from pain? Will this medication be used by new pain patients or more likely by those who are currently taking medications for chronic pain?

The focus on preventing opioid abuse and misuse is more than a single drug. As practitioners committed to eliminating opioid misuse and abuse, we know that the focus is through a telescope not a microscope. Identifying the primary causes such as excessive prescribing (possibly due to lack of practitioner and consumer education about pain management), illegal activity by a small number of providers who represent a large portion of the diversion and misuse, proper storage of medications and legal disposal of unused medications are what need to be addressed.

ASPMN® is committed to reducing the misuse and abuse of opioids while ensuring that there is access to pain medicines for patients in need, using equal parts of scientific data and common sense.