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The Politics of Pain & Painkillers: Public Policy & Patient Access to Effective Pain Treatments

CHRONIC PAIN FACTS

- 50 million The estimated number of Americans who suffer from persistent pain
- 3 out of 4 The number who say they are either suffering from pain themselves, or Have a close family member or friend who is suffering, according to a Sept. 2003 poll by Research!America.
- \$100 billion The economic cost of pain from things such as lost workdays and unnecessary hospitalizations. This does not take in account cost associated with welfare, SSI or Medicaid claims, or many other costs. (Details of study: www.doctordeluca.com/Library/Pain/LostProductivity2ndPain03.htm)
- \$138 million DOJ 2005 budget request to fund DEA diversion initiatives
- 3% The number of medical schools that have a separate, required course on pain management
- 1,100 The number of times a year that EACH AND EVERY pain doctor would have to write illegal prescriptions for pain drugs if the government claims of widespread abuse are correct.
- 10 days More than half (53%) of pain drug abusers admit to doing so for 10 days or less.

THE WAR ON DOCTORS AND PATIENTS

- **The "War on Drugs" has come to mean a war on lawful drugs also** -- and against the doctors who prescribe them and the patients who take them. But this war is causing enormous collateral damage and deaths from "friendly fire."
 - **Physicians are being threatened, impoverished, delicensed, and imprisoned** for prescribing in good faith with the intention of relieving pain. Physicians have been drummed out of practice, sent to jail, and even been driven to suicide in the face of these 21st century witch hunts.
 - If this continues, **not one doctor will be willing to prescribe the drugs that patients so desperately need.** The real problem is not drugs, but drug misuse.
 - **The Association of American Physicians and Surgeons has issued a warning to doctors:** *"If you're thinking about getting into pain management using opioids as appropriate -- DON'T. Forget what you learned in medical school -- drug agents now set medical standards. Or if you do, first discuss the risks with your family."*
 - **"Our office will try our best to root out [certain doctors] like the Taliban. Stay tuned."** *Assistant U.S. Attorney Gene Rossi to a reporter.* In Sept. 2003, the President pointed to physician prosecutions as the example of how he wants to pursue terrorists.
 - **Former Surgeon General, David Satcher and former HHS Secretary Dr. Louis Sullivan,** have joined with the American Academy of Pain Medicine to conduct an initiative to educate medical students on pain treatment. (www.painmed.org)
 - **"Untreated pain, tragically, is an epidemic in the United States...Millions of Americans are suffering in agony unnecessarily. That's why our nation's future doctors need to learn the latest and best treatments for pain."** *Former HHS Secretary, Louis Sullivan (9/9/03)*
 - **Most illicit drug users are young, and obtain them from sources other than a doctor.** Even the Department of Justice admits this is true: "young people rarely obtain prescription drugs using methods commonly associated with pharmaceutical diversion such as pharmacy theft, prescription fraud, or doctor shopping--visiting numerous doctors to obtain multiple prescriptions." (*Information Brief: Prescription Drug Abuse and Youth*, National Drug Intelligence Center, Document ID: 2002-L0424-004, August 2002,)
 - **The illicit use of prescription drugs by a few does not warrant the sledgehammer approach** by the DEA, U.S. Attorneys and local law enforcement that affects MILLIONS of patients, doctors and their families.
 - **Abusers don't quit abusing drugs, they just switch to one that isn't getting as much attention.** The public crackdown on prescription drugs is sending young abusers to heroin instead, which carries a 6-fold risk of harm compared to prescription drugs. (*Boston Herald, Monday, April 5, 2004*) Government numbers support this. (*2002 National Survey of Drug Use and Health, NSDUH*)
 - "Congress should take action to rein in overzealous prosecutors and law enforcement offices and stop the harassment of legitimate pain management physicians," **CONGRESSMAN RON PAUL, MD (R-TX)**
 - **Stories of OxyContin abuse & deaths attributed to it's use have been rebutted.** In August, 2004 the Orlando Sentinel repudiated the faulty statistics it had used in a series of stories and issued an apology.
- The Association of American Physicians and Surgeons is a non-partisan, professional association of physicians in all specialties, dedicated since 1943 to the protection of the patient-physician relationship.*