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**AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF CANCER PAIN INITIATIVES URGES CAUTION IN  
IMPLEMENTING STATE PRESCRIPTION MONITORING PROGRAMS**

***EFFORTS TO CURB ABUSE AND DIVERSION OF PAIN MEDICATIONS COULD  
ADVERSELY AFFECT PATIENT CARE***

**(Madison, WI)** In a statement released today, the American Alliance of Cancer Pain Initiatives urged states to adopt balanced approaches when dealing with abuse and diversion of prescription pain medications so that such efforts do not harm patients who need the medicines to relieve their pain. The statement was made as several states are considering new programs to track the prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances to prevent the drugs from being diverted to illegal uses.

“Prescription drug abuse is a serious problem in this country, but so is unrelieved pain. We must be careful so that efforts to address drug abuse and diversion do not make it more difficult for patients in pain to obtain necessary and appropriate medical care,” said Robert Twillman, PhD, president-elect of the AACPI. Dr. Twillman said that states must use caution to assure that regulations to track the prescribing patterns of physicians do not increase physician fear of investigation or discipline and make them more reluctant to prescribe controlled substances, such as opioids, to manage pain. For many patients opioid analgesics are the most effective way to treat pain.

Currently, 16 states have active prescription monitoring programs for controlled substances, including pain relieving opioids like morphine, hydrocodone, and oxycodone. The programs collect information on the prescribing, dispensing and use of prescription drugs. The information is intended to help regulators and law enforcement identify health care professionals and patients who may be diverting the medicine for non-medical and illegal uses. The United States Congress recently approved \$2 million for the U.S. Department of Justice to help states establish prescription monitoring programs to address diversion.

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"The AACPI does not oppose prescription monitoring programs per se, but we want to make sure that they do not interfere with the use of controlled substances for legitimate medical purposes," said Twillman. In its statement the AACPI recommended that states:

- fully utilize existing resources to identify sources of diversion, such as prescription data from the Medicaid Drug Utilization Review program, before enacting new and expensive programs that may adversely affect patient care;
- involve a multidisciplinary medical review group in the development, review and evaluation of any diversion prevention and control program;
- assure that prescription monitoring programs a) are administered by the state agency regulating health care, b) do not include special government issued, serialized prescription forms which may deter physicians from prescribing the medications,
- c) covers all controlled substances in Schedules II, III, and IV; and, d) protects patient confidentiality;
- encourage educational programs to address healthcare professionals' perceptions about prescription monitoring programs and minimize concern about regulatory scrutiny when prescribing and dispensing controlled substances as part of legitimate medical practice;
- evaluate the impact of prescription monitoring programs on both patients needing controlled substances for legitimate medical purposes and the prevalence and incidence of drug abuse and diversion.

"It will take an ongoing, interdisciplinary strategy to comprehensively address these issues. Thoughtful, respectful dialogue needs to take place between law enforcement and the health care community before significant progress can be made," said Kandyce Powell, RN, MSN, president of the AACPI and director of the Maine Cancer Pain Initiative.

The entire statement on prescription monitoring programs can be viewed online at [www.aacpi.org](http://www.aacpi.org).

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*The American Alliance of Cancer Pain Initiatives is a leading national nonprofit organization dedicated to improving cancer pain management. The AACPI is a grassroots network of state, regional and Native American Pain Initiatives — voluntary organizations composed of healthcare professionals, researchers, educators and patient advocates. By united persons from different disciplines, Cancer Pain Initiatives are removing the barriers that impede effective pain relief through education, advocacy, and institutional and practice change. For more information call 608-265-4013 or visit [www.aacpi.org](http://www.aacpi.org).*

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