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State Report Card on Pain Policy Is Good News to the Alliance of State Pain Initiatives

(Madison, WI) The Alliance of State Pain Initiatives (ASPI) is pleased with a report that shows improvement in state government policies related to pain management. *Achieving Balance in State Pain Policy: A Progress Report Card*, released on July 17, 2007, by the Pain & Policy Studies Group (PPSG) at the University of Wisconsin, gives eight states -- Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Wisconsin -- higher "grades" for their pain policies than a year ago. States are rated with a letter grade (A - F) based on the quality of their laws, regulations, and state-issued guidelines and statements that affect the management of pain.

The ASPI and its network of state-level pain management improvement organizations rely on the PPSG's valuable work to help identify areas in public policy which need to be changed and improved so they do not hinder a person's ability to get the care they need. "The hard work by advocates for better pain management is paying off," said Debora Treu, director of the ASPI. "The higher grades attained by Arizona, Connecticut, Kansas, and Wisconsin are partly the result of State Pain Initiatives working together with legislators and state medical licensing boards. Many state legislators and regulatory officials now recognize how critical quality pain management is for the health and welfare of their citizens, and many are eager to work with the ASPI and others to promote better care," said Treu.

Although the report shows progress in improving state policies, the ASPI recognizes that policy change alone will not improve care. The policies must be widely communicate to and fully understood by health care professionals in order for them to have a positive impact on patient care.

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Uncontrolled pain is a significant public health problem. More than seventy-five million Americans suffer from persistent pain, and each year another twenty-five million experience acute pain as a result of injuries or surgery. For persons with cancer, one-third experience pain at the time of diagnosis and more than two-thirds have significant pain as the disease progresses.

Despite the fact that most, if not all, pain can be relieved or greatly eased with existing therapies, many barriers exist that prevent the adequate management of pain. Those barriers include misunderstandings and unfounded fears about pain medications, lack of knowledge among health care professionals on how to properly assess and treat pain, poor communication between patients and their health care providers, the low priority given to pain control in the health care system, and government policies such as those evaluated by the Pain and Policy Studies Group.

The complete reports, *Achieving Balance in State Pain Policy: A Progress Report Card, (Third Edition)* and accompanying *Achieving Balance in Federal and State Pain Policy: A Guide to Evaluation (Fourth Edition)* are available at the Pain and Policy Studies Group website: <http://www.painpolicy.wisc.edu/>

About the Alliance of State Pain Initiatives

The Alliance of State Pain Initiatives (ASPI) is a network of State Pain Initiatives that work to transform the culture of pain care through education, advocacy, and institutional improvement. The national office of the ASPI is part of the University of Wisconsin Paul P. Carbone Comprehensive Cancer Center. For more information, visit <http://www.aspi.wisc.edu/>

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