



**American Alliance of Cancer Pain Initiatives**

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**For information contact:**  
Matt Bromley, 608-265-8655 [mdbromley@wisc.edu](mailto:mdbromley@wisc.edu)

## **Report Card Shows Progress in State Pain Policy** *State Pain Initiatives Contribute to Improved Grades*

(Madison, WI) The American Alliance of Cancer Pain Initiatives says a report released this week that evaluates the quality of state laws and regulations affecting the management of pain shows that states are making improvements in their public policies. *Achieving Balance in State Pain Policy: A Progress Report Card*, released today by the Pain & Policy Studies Group at the University of Wisconsin, indicates that forty-one states and the District of Columbia have above average (C) grades when it comes to public policies that influence the practice of pain management. Since 2003, nineteen states have improved their grade.

The report is good news to the AACPI and its network of State Pain Initiatives that have long worked towards ensuring that government policies do not hinder a person's ability to get the care they need. "The hard work by advocates for pain management is starting to show," said Patrick Coyne, chairperson of the AACPI's advisory council. Coyne pointed to the AACPI's participation with the Federation of State Medical Boards in drafting a "Model Policy for the Use of Controlled Substances for the Treatment of Pain", and the State Pain Initiatives' leadership with statewide regulatory summits and task forces as examples of the type of activities that have contributed to the progress of state pain policy over the last several years.

"As we continue to address the barriers to pain management that remain in our public policies, we must also recognize that policy change alone will not improve care," said Coyne. "We must make sure health care professionals are aware of and understand the policies."

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

#### **About the American Alliance of Cancer Pain Initiatives**

The American Alliance of Cancer Pain Initiatives (AACPI) is a network of State Pain Initiatives that work to remove the barriers that impede pain relief through education, advocacy, and institutional improvement. The national office of the AACPI is part of the University of Wisconsin Paul P. Carbone Comprehensive Cancer Center. For more information, visit <http://www.aacpi.wisc.edu/>

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