



Treat Addiction. Save Lives.

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE REVIEW

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ASAM APPROVES PRESCRIPTION DRUG POLICY

Mandatory Prescriber Education for All Classes, All Schedules of Controlled Substances

CHEVY CHASE, MD, January 26, 2012 – “Prescription drug diversion and the health consequences of prescription drug misuse and abuse should be of primary concern to all physicians,” states American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Acting President, Stuart Gitlow, MD. “Tens of thousands of Americans are overdosing on prescription pain medication and many of these prescriptions are coming from doctors’ offices.”

Chronic pain and addiction are issues faced by patients from all walks of life and in all types of treatment settings. And, yet, very few physicians are sufficiently educated about the potential psychiatric and addiction consequences of prescribing scheduled medications like opioid analgesics and sedative hypnotics (two of the most commonly misused classes of prescription medication). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that the sale of prescription pain drugs has increased by 300% since 1999 and the most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration) reports that nearly 1 in 6 non-medical users of prescription pain killers got the drug through a prescription from a doctor. Currently, there are no requirements that prescribers prove they are competent to prescribe these potentially lethal drugs.

“Prescription drug use and overdose death are becoming a public health crisis,” says Dr. Gitlow. “Physicians and patients should understand the risks and benefits of using these powerful drugs and make educated treatment choices.” To that end, ASAM recommends that all health professionals who can prescribe scheduled medications must be included in any educational efforts to improve patient outcomes and public health. One part of the solution is to mandate prescriber education for all health professionals licensed to prescribe, dispense or administer prescription drugs. A public health response should also include patient education, training for medical students and residents in safe prescribing

practices, pain medicine and addiction medicine, implementation of coordinated state prescription drug monitoring programs, and support for continued research on patterns of manufacture, distribution and sales of psychoactive drugs which have the potential for diversion and misuse.

To read ASAM's Public Policy Statement on Measures to Counteract Prescription Drug Diversion, Misuse and Dependence, please click [here](#).

The American Society for Addiction Medicine is a professional society representing close to 3,000 physicians dedicated to increasing access and improving quality of addiction treatment, educating physicians and the public, supporting research and prevention, and promoting the appropriate role of physicians in the care of patients with addictions.

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