



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEONS

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July 7, 2015

Patrice A. Harris, MD  
Chair-Elect  
American Medical Association  
330 N. Wabash Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60611

Dear Dr. Harris,

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS/Academy), representing nearly 18,000 Board-certified orthopaedic surgeons, supports the efforts of the American Medical Association (AMA) Task Force to Reduce Opioid Abuse. The Academy shares the AMA's concerns regarding the misuse and abuse of opioids. Recognizing the urgency of this public health problem, the AAOS is supportive of a multipronged, comprehensive program to mitigate this epidemic.

Specifically, the AMA Task Force to Reduce Opioid Abuse recommendations:

- **Increase physicians' use of effective Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs** – The AAOS believes patient safety will be enhanced if physicians and pharmacists are able to see all prescriptions filled by a given patient.
- **Enhance physicians' education on appropriate prescribing** – The AAOS believes physician and caregiver awareness of the risks and appropriateness of opioid medications will help reduce opioid use and misuse.
- **Reduce the stigma of pain and promote comprehensive assessment and treatment** – The AAOS believes using alternative pain management strategies should be considered, including patient referral to multidisciplinary pain treatment centers.
- **Reduce the stigma of substance abuse disorder and enhance access to treatment** – The AAOS believes that patients at a greater risk of opioid misuse and abuse need to be identified as soon as possible and should be treated appropriately.

The AAOS commends the AMA for undertaking this effort. Making opioids the focus of pain management has created many unintended consequences that often put both patients and their families at increased risk of addiction and death. A new approach to pain management is needed to effectively change the cultural expectations of patients with pain. Our current cultural expectation of opioid use as the primary treatment chronic pain in the United States has created an opioid epidemic. Only a culture change led by physicians dedicated to limiting inappropriate opioid use will solve this epidemic. Physicians, patients, and caregivers in the United States need to learn how to treat pain with less dependency on opioid medications.

Sincerely,

David Teuscher, MD  
President, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons