

"Pain Patients Excluded from Hearings on Prescription Drug Abuse"
Written Testimony of Siobhan Reynolds, President of the Pain Relief Network

to:

Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr.
Senate Judiciary Committee

Subcommittee on Crime and Drugs

"Generation Rx: The Abuse of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs"

March 12, 2008; 2:00 PM; Dirksen-226

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for accepting my testimony on the subject before your committee today. As the president of the Pain Relief Network, the nation's leading advocacy organization for the promotion of medical pain management, it is my duty to inform you that our nation's increasing focus on legal medications as a matter of law enforcement concern is costing vulnerable Americans their lives.

Opioid pain medications have been a Godsend to man for over two thousand years. They are as vital to the treatment of pain as insulin is to the treatment of diabetes. But now, in America under the Bush Administration and its "War on Prescription Drug Abuse", American men and women, children, babies, and veterans are unable to access effective dosages of these medications, the only medications that actually provide relief.

Under the guise of working to protect the public health, the Federal bureaucracy is criminalizing the medical use of controlled substances, even though the structural premise of the Controlled Substances Act is that medical practice and its employment of opioids in the treatment of pain will be untouched by Federal police interference. So what you have, Mr. Chairman is a press and legislative campaign on the part of the drug war bureaucracy to expand its purview into the area of legal medications, an area where they simply have no legitimate business.

All across the country, medical boards and Federal police are summarily suspending the licenses of doctors who treat pain with Controlled Substances. At this very moment, Pain Relief Network is actively involved in a Federal criminal case in Wichita, Kansas, where a pain-treating doctor and his wife have been jailed without bond, have had all their assets seized, and have been smeared in the press. With a win-at-all-costs mentality motivating the prosecutor's behavior, the thousand or so patients of the clinic run by the doctor have been thrown to the curb, forced to fend for themselves in a world polluted by a century-old propaganda campaign that furthers the interests of criminals and law enforcement and no one else. Shut out of emergency rooms, viewed suspiciously by the medical community at large, patients who require FDA approved pain medication for the management of their illness have become a hunted minority.

Spied on by NASPER computers, drug-tested by their doctors and hospital personnel, and referred to as "drug addicts" by anyone seeking to deny them care or reimbursement, patients in pain and others who rely on Controlled Substances have been rendered a

suspect class by virtue of our nation's prohibition statutes.

The government officials who will speak at the hearing will talk about compassion and the scourge of prescription drug abuse, but what they will be doing is delivering a message of fear and intimidation to the vulnerable patients and their families. And as has been a tried and true method of gaining government power, where limits should be enforced, these government employees will attempt to shift the focus away from the humanitarian and public health disaster resulting from their misbegotten policies, and focus your mind, and the mind of the public, on "stamping out non-medical drug use" – as if such a thing were even possible.

Patients in pain and others who rely on Controlled Substances are being destroyed in this country every day, and yet these officials, who purport to care so much about doing the right thing, refuse to acknowledge that this is, in fact, what is going on. When medically ill people arrive at emergency rooms in desperate need of actual medication, they are instead left in withdrawal and referred to addiction treatment facilities. And indeed the terror has spread, for we hear every day that children of patients of the doctors targeted by law enforcement are being refused care by emergency rooms. So the stigma is not confined to the Controlled Substances themselves, but has spread to the human beings and their families who were unlucky enough to have been part of a targeted practice.

While we at Pain Relief Network sympathize with the plight of those who find themselves addicted to prescription medications, using them in a compulsive and destructive manner. But we have to bring the larger and far more serious problem to your committee's attention, and that is the far larger group of legitimate pain patients who depend on these medications to lead a functional life and care for their families, but are increasingly being denied them.

It is unfortunate that Pain Relief Network was not invited to represent the patients at this hearing, and so the public will instead be treated to a kind of government fear show pushing this year's moral panic, prescription drug abuse, that seeks merely to distract attention away from the government's astonishingly brutal and thoughtless drug war campaigns, willfully ignoring direct harm to millions of innocent citizens, though their plight is in plain view.

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