American Pain Society
Statement on Research, Funding, and Opioids
7/17/2018

New and innovative pain treatments to replace opioids will not be discovered unless pain research funding becomes a priority on Capitol Hill. The APS Pain Research Agenda, published in the Journal of Pain in 2014, states “the most direct path to achieving dramatic advances in pain treatment is through substantially increased investment in pain research and education, which would enable the pursuit of an aggressive translational pain-research agenda.”

It will take years for new, non-opioid pain therapies to emerge from research laboratories. Until then, proven, non-pharmacologic alternatives to opioids offer great potential to reduce opioid prescribing. Biopsychosocial approaches to pain assessment offer excellent potential to enhance treatment outcomes by better matching patients to appropriate treatments. Studies referenced in the National Pain Strategy show that psychosocial pain treatments work and are making a difference. Unfortunately, many patients are unable to access multidisciplinary pain care because there is little or no insurance coverage. Medicare, Medicaid and private insurers must offer coverage for biopsychosocial pain management as part of a comprehensive national effort to bring relief to people with chronic pain without resorting to addictive opioids.

APS strongly believes policy debates about opioids should focus on:
- allocating significantly more federal research dollars for grants to develop new, non-addictive pain medications,
- fostering wider use of proven alternative therapies,
- improving insurance coverage for these therapies, and
- utilizing scientific evidence in the development of recommendations for care and professional education.

Pain research today is woefully underfunded relative to its prevalence, disease burden and economic toll. New therapeutic interventions can be discovered through investments in basic science advances exploring the biology of pain, its development into a chronic disease state, and new targets for development of novel pain therapies. Expanding clinical trials of alternative therapies, translational biomedicine pain research, patient registries, and outcomes research will further advance treatments for those suffering in pain.

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