

Pain Patients' Rights Are Being Trampled

Editor, News-Register:

Since 2013, my office has had to endure multiple raids and investigations with the sole purpose of trying to identify me as a diverter of Opioid Rx as well as whether the patients I treat "deserve" their pain medication or are themselves fraudulent and diverting their prescription medications.

The end result is that neither patients who suffer from painful conditions nor the doctors trying to alleviate their painful condi-

tion(s) have constitutional rights of privacy.

Not only is the federal government looking at your medical records, so are the State "Fraud" units of Medicaid, Controlled Substances, and even the Department of Health and Human Resources.

Never before have I, as well as the patients treated in my clinic felt so "helpless," so "violated," simply because we treat a population of patients diagnosed with painful conditions requiring pain medication.

No other population of patients including those with heart conditions, hypertension, lung conditions, diabetes, goes through this type of scrutiny and discrimination. These other groups may be "investigated" if the insurance company feels that the medical provider is defrauding them with too many bills, etc. These providers and patients, however, will never deal with DEA and FBI agents going to their homes to "interview" them about their medical treatments.

Pain, unfortunately, has been demonized and so has any American citizen who unfortunately suffers from a painful condition. Both federal and state governments have taken it upon themselves to "cross the line" into the privacy of our medical records and no one seems to care or be aware of this major breach in our freedom. Pain patients and the health care providers have been made to feel that they have done something wrong even through no fault of themselves. Patients can't help it if they had a bad surgical outcome, motor vehicle accident, work-related injury, or assaulted in the past. They have a big target on their back as soon as they receive a controlled substance.

The Controlled Substance Act of 1970 was devised to regulate the inventory of opioids in this country, not used to collect data on patients so that they could be interrogated and meant to feel intimidated!

West Virginia is No. 1 in heroin overdoses in the entire country. You can't blame physicians for heroin, as they do not Rx that substance and heroin is supposed to be under the vigilant eye of the DEA. Addiction and chronic pain are two very different diseases!

Laws passed by West Virginia Legislature over the past couple of years have severely restricted physicians and PA's and NP's can't prescribe, yet West Virginia is ranked high in drug diversion. This is a cultural problem, not a problem of law abiding physicians and patients who are trying to improve function and quality of life.

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