

**MASSACHUSETTS PAIN INITIATIVE
MASSPI LEGISLATIVE UPDATE
Summer 2005**



EFFORTS TO BAN OXYCONTIN IN MA:

As you have probably heard or read in the media, Massachusetts legislators have recently filed bills that would ban long-acting, time-release oxycodone at both the state and federal levels. As we all know, “banning” specific pain medications would be hugely detrimental to our efforts to ensure quality pain management in the state. Please take a minute to read the following update on MassPI’s efforts to combat the passage of this legislation. **We need YOUR VOICES to help convince lawmakers that we can work together to curb abuse WITHOUT impeding patient care!**

BACKGROUND:

At the federal level, United State Representative Steven Lynch (D-MA-9) has filed legislation (HR #2195) to ban OxyContin. Please visit the following link and plug in the bill # to read the full bill text: www.congress.gov. The bill has been referred to the Subcommittee on Health, but no action has been taken. Rep. Lynch has made some inaccurate public statements about Oxycontin, reflecting common misperceptions about pain management and this important analgesic. An important role for MassPI will be to educate him and other legislators before this bill progresses further.

At the state level, State Senator Steve Tolman (D-Brighton) and State Representative Brian Wallace (D-South Boston) have filed identical bills in their respective chambers to ban controlled-release oxycodone and hydromorphone. Senator Tolman chairs the newly formed Committee on Substance Abuse and Mental Health, and Rep. Wallace also serves on this Committee. While the bills have been filed, they have not yet been given bill #s and they have not yet been referred to a committee. Historically, both Tolman and Wallace have been supportive of health care initiatives but have publicly stated that these bills are a direct result of the abuse and diversion problems that are plaguing their respective districts. It is our impression that they are using these bills as a “wake up” call for the pharmaceutical industry to take greater actions against increased abuse and diversion. However, we believe it is MassPI’s responsibility to educate these (and other legislators) on the benefits of controlled-release oxycodone and hydromorphone in pain management. We are hoping to work with the Legislature to develop carefully balanced policies that do not interfere with appropriate patient care.

Meanwhile, the Legislature has formed a different Commission that has been tasked to provide recommendations to address the illicit use of prescription drugs. Since the Commission has primarily focused on OxyContin abuse, MassPI successfully lobbied to ensure that the pain community was represented on the Commission. Along with MassPI representative Dr. Bob Jamison, the Commission is comprised of legislators, doctors, nurses, pharmacists and a diverse cross-section of other medical professionals. Still in its “information gathering stage,” the Commission has hosted three regional public hearings (in Lynn, Framingham and Bridgewater). The final hearing will be located at the State House, presumably in September. MassPI has been monitoring the Commission’s work closely, and has arranged for practitioners and patients to testify

at the hearings. At this point, we are confident that the Commission understands the need for a balanced approach to successfully curb abuse of pain medications.

MASSPI ACTIONS:

Since legislators have been hearing real life stories of the prescription drug abuse facing their constituents, we have been taking the necessary steps to put “faces” on the pain management side of the issue. In concert with ACS, MassPI has been making the rounds at the State House, bringing constituent clinicians and patients to meet with members of the Substance Abuse Committee and other key decision makers in the state Legislature, including the bill sponsors, Sen. Tolman and Rep. Wallace. On the whole, these meetings have been very positive and we have made great strides in educating legislators on the crucial need for the vast array of pain management treatments, including OxyContin. We are also in the process of scheduling a meeting with U.S. Rep. Lynch when he returns to the Boston area, potentially during the week of the July 4th Congressional Recess. In addition, we are prepared to use the media as a tool to combat these legislative efforts. If and when the bills are considered at legislative hearings, we will employ more comprehensive grassroots and media strategies to voice our opposition to the bills. Please see below for a list of meetings we’ve had to date, and please keep reading **to learn how you can help us in these efforts.**

Meetings to date:

Senate – Wilkerson, Tisei, Tolman Berry, Hart

House – Balsler, Malia, Wallace

The following meetings are in the process of being scheduled:

Senate – Antonioni, Moore, Leadership

House – M. Walsh, S. Walsh, Donelan, Scibak, Flanagan, Polito, Ross, Koutoujian, Bradley, Leadership

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Get to know your legislators! MassPI is developing a database of our members’ individual legislators. Please send Amy.Goldstein@cancer.org your federal and state legislators to be included on this list. If you do not know who represents your city or town, visit http://capwiz.com/acs-national/dbq/officials/?lvl=L&affiliate_lookup=1 -- and just plug in your zip code. Some zip codes are split between legislative districts so be prepared to also include your address or zip+4 if prompted. Once we have your legislative information, it will be much easier for us to utilize your expertise in targeted legislative efforts. It’s as easy as making a phone call, sending an email, or attending a meeting. **It only takes a minute to make sure your voices are heard!**

In addition, please **STAY TUNED for future Action Alerts.** During key milestones in the legislative process, we will send periodic emails that will tell you when we need you to make a call or send a letter. **With your help, we can continue to promote quality pain management policies in Massachusetts!**

Questions/comments? Contact Amy Goldstein, amy.Goldstein@cancer.org or 508-270-4653