



**Monday through Friday**  
8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.

**Saturdays & Holidays**  
9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

**Sundays & Christmas**  
Noon to 4:00 P.M.

## ***IT'S ABOUT PAIN***

A monthly service of Kirkpatrick Family Care

Vol 1, Number 4, December 2016

### **Putting the Opioid Epidemic in Perspective**

American media is flooding us with data that show increasing deaths from prescription opioids, intentional and accidental, legally or illegally obtained. Any more, nothing is said about homegrown meth or smuggled meth, coke and opioids from Mexico. Ever wonder why?

Simply put, Criminals must be detected, located, captured, charged, convicted and incarcerated, whereas patients and doctors are sympathetic, and respond to publicity. Building The Trump Wall and arresting the smugglers is more costly than pronouncements and press releases.

As prescribers, we are conflicted. We want to reduce the availability of Black Market opioids, but we are also committed to alleviating the suffering of, and increasing the quality of life for, our injured and ill patients in pain.

We read articles detailing young adults overdosing on granny's pain meds. We hear the fears of the American Pain Association, that the pain patient without meds has 4 bad options: 1) go to bed and stop physical activity; 2) buy black market pills; 3) switch to heroin; 4) commit suicide.

Now we hear of the Seattle man whose doctor quit prescribing, shooting himself in both temples, when no replacement prescriber would help.

**Per Federal stats: PRESCRIPTION OPIOID ABUSE affects 2.1 million Americans, with an annual cost of \$55.7B. But CHRONIC PAIN affects 100 million Americans, costing \$635B (care and lost productivity). Clearly these are both substantial problems.**

So, what to do? 1) Hope **Trump's wall and border enforcement** will block the flow of illegal drugs. 2) Be more careful, ie prescribing fewer pills for fewer patients. 3) seek other solutions, which are costly: 1) finding **more pain specialists** to prescribe (rare nowadays); 2) force **better insurance coverage for TENS units and \$100 Physical/Massage Therapy and acupuncture** treatments; 3) require Workers Comp to **pay for spinal fusions and spinal cord stimulators**.

**Focus on pain/opioid issues is on a pendulum.** Four years ago, doctors were castigated for NOT prescribing enough, hence denying patients a normal lifestyle (See Forman, J, *A NATION IN PAIN*, Random House 2012). Now, we are at the opposite end of the continuum. It is an unpleasant place to be, for everybody.

Please be patient with us, as we seek to balance the pressure from the Government and Professional Associations, with your needs for pain control and maintaining your activities.