

IT'S ABOUT PAIN

A Lull Before The Storm

For the past couple months we've been relaxed and confident. Each of our 531 victims of chronic pain had a consistent source of his/her medications. Thanks go to heroic efforts by Bethany Crawford and Ethan Proctor and a volunteer courier who helped disabled patients who had no transportation.

Costco had come through, accommodating over 70 patients who had been dropped by independent pharmacies because of **Exhibit P** of the ***Distributor Settlement Agreement***, which required them to stop filling prescriptions written by the Top Ten prescribers in their area. Given that so few doctors and midlevels in our area are willing to prescribe opioids for chronic pain, the endorsement of our efforts by Costco's Regional Pharmacy Manager was a God-send.

Ever get the feeling that things are too good to be true? That something bad is going to happen?

Well, it did. Apparently overruling the NW Regional Pharmacy Manager, corporate Costco, with 4 days notice, stopped filling our prescriptions for opioid pain medication. BUT WORSE, they blocked all controlled substances, even testosterone, Lomotil for diarrhea, Ritalin for ADHD and narcolepsy, all sedative sleeping pills and tranquilizers, and even pain meds that are non-narcotic: pregabalin/Lyrica, Suboxone, and Subutex/buprenorphine. What's the sense in that?

Well, **Exhibit P** forces suspension of prescriptions for ALL "controlled substances" written by those evil (???) Top Ten prescribers of opioids.

So what now? We have found success in several ways:

- Supportive small pharmacies have rescued some patients
- Mail Order pharmacies Optum and Centerwell accepted patients
- Pain Clinics agreed to consult for procedures
- We found prescribers not (yet) on the Top Ten list
- Some major retail chain stores began to accept scripts written by Dr. Nielson and our midlevels. (Formerly they blocked prescriptions from all of our clinicians.)
- A new potential treatment for chronic pain is Ketamine Infusions. We are looking into details.

We can often LESSEN but not fully control pain via physical therapy, ice/heat, topical creams, massage, chiropractic, TENS units, distraction therapy, injections, braces and splints, acupuncture, muscle relaxers, supplements and Tylenol/ibuprofen. Tranquilizers and antidepressants can help if anxiety or depression is aggravating pain. Most of our patients have already failed to benefit from those options, but might try them again.

But to reclaim access to opioids, we need to mobilize public support to persuade the states' Attorney General that created **Exhibit P**, to erase it. Our own Bob Ferguson, who signed on this, is now running for Governor. Sometimes political candidates pay attention to the public—so we need to make our needs known to him.

Bob Ferguson for Governor's website is <bobferguson.com>. Regarding the opioid issue, here are quotes from his website:

The \$1 billion Ferguson has in hand was retrieved through litigation against opioid distributors.

The state has made financial investments recently in an attempt to address the opioid epidemic.

Legislators allocated a little under \$65 million from the opioids payout for treatment in 2023.

Among the appropriations:

** About \$18 million to support prevention, treatment and recovery support services.*

** About \$15 million to tribes and Urban Indian Health programs for opioid and overdose response.*

** \$5 million to the state Department of Health for its naloxone distribution program and overdose education initiatives.*

** \$4 million to fund short-term housing vouchers for people with substance use disorders.*

In Washington, 125 local governments signed on to receive money from a \$518 million resolution from earlier lawsuits. The local governments will decide how to spend the money they receive.

Now that this money has been secured, there is no point in continuing to harm patients with chronic pain via the terms of Exhibit P. Tell Mr. Ferguson to erase Exhibit P before great harm (including death) comes to patients with chronic pain, and their families.

