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Physicians urged to talk about effects of pain meds and medical conditions

DES MOINES, IA – The Iowa Board of Medicine is encouraging Iowa physicians to counsel their patients about the effects that pain medicines may have on their patients' ability to safely operate motor vehicles.

The Board's urging is prompted by a recent National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) study that identified potential risks that prescription pain medicines and a patient's medical condition can create when a patient operates a vehicle in any mode of transportation. The NTSB's study and resulting recommendations are available at <http://www.nts.gov> under report SS-14/01.

The Board in October initiated rulemaking (ARC 1708C) to require physicians to provide and document their consults with patients who are prescribed pain medicines. The proposed rule received several comments from physicians and healthcare organizations who said a mandated requirement was not necessary as it is standard practice for physicians and pharmacists to have conversations with patients about the effects of any prescribed medications, including pain medications.

After two public hearings on the proposed rule and the review of written comments, the Board on December 5 determined to discontinue the rulemaking process for ARC 1708C, which would have established the practice standard recommended by the NTSB.

In recent years, the Board has taken several steps to heighten physicians' awareness about the effects of pain medications, including addiction. The Board has adopted extensive standards of practice rules on treating acute pain and managing chronic pain. In addition, effective August 1, 2016, Iowa-license physicians will be required to complete continuing medical education activities on responsible opioid prescribing.