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For Immediate Release

Boards issue joint statement on managing patients' pain

DES MOINES, IA – Four boards that license health professionals in Iowa have issued a joint statement encouraging health care practitioners to attend to patients' pain – whether it's acute, chronic, mild or severe.

The statement, approved over the past 10 months by the Boards of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Physician Assistants, acknowledges, "much more can be done to treat pain more appropriately." The boards have been long concerned about patients who are either over-treated or under-treated.

Although it is not a legally binding opinion of the boards, the statement says a licensed practitioner involved in the care of a patient in pain "should not be at risk of disciplinary action from their respective licensing board for prescribing, dispensing or administering controlled substances, including opioid analgesics, for a legitimate medical purpose, based on accepted scientific knowledge, sound clinical judgment and adequate documentation."

Pain treatment may involve the use of several medications, including hydrocodone (Vicodan), and non-pharmacological treatment modalities, often in combination.

Inappropriate prescribing of controlled substances can lead to drug abuse or diversion and can also lead to ineffective management of pain. The statement notes that the goal of pain management is to treat each patient's pain in relation to the patient's overall health.

"Unmanaged or inappropriately treated pain impacts patients' quality of life, reduces patients' ability to be productive members of society and increases patients' use of health care services," the statement says.

The statement is posted on the boards' Websites:

www.medicalboard.iowa.gov

www.state.ia.us/nursing/

www.state.ia.us/ibpe/

www.idph.state.ia.us/licensure/board_home.asp?board=pa