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The American Academy of Pain Medicine Position Statement on Opioid Therapy for Intractable Pain

WHEREAS, intractable pain has serious adverse health consequences, including premature death; and

WHEREAS, physicians have a positive ethical duty to treat intractable pain; and

WHEREAS, there are many people living with intractable pain for whom opioids may prove a beneficial part of comprehensive pain therapy; and

WHEREAS, opioid medications carry serious potential risks that must be carefully considered against any intended benefits; and

WHEREAS, physicians have a responsibility to consider and weigh the benefits and risks of all therapeutic modalities, including opioids, and administer or prescribe them as safely and effectively as possible; and

WHEREAS, there is insufficient evidence to predict in advance with certainty benefits and harms in individual cases from many chronic pain therapies, including opioids:

RESOLVED, congruent with the Institute of Medicine consensus report on Relieving Pain in America, and in accord with its mission to optimize the health of those living with pain and to eliminate pain as a major public health problem, and in fulfillment of its Ethics Charter, the American Academy of Pain Medicine must:

Educate physicians in safe and effective pain practices, including chronic opioid therapy, to ensure that patients living with pain have access to all potentially beneficial therapeutic modalities; and

Actively promote rigorous research to improve therapeutic outcomes and minimize harms associated with opioid therapy; and

Advocate for regulatory and insurance coverage policies that, balancing patient needs and public safety, support and do not hinder fair and equitable access to indicated therapies.