

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Mission Support

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The American Academy of Pain Medicine’s (AAPM) mission, “. . . to optimize the health of patients in pain and eliminate the major public health problem of pain . . .,” was provided the equivalent of a highly energizing shot of adrenaline over this past summer, when the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies released its report titled, “Relieving Pain in America: A Blueprint for Transforming Prevention, Care, Education and Research” [1]. Notwithstanding the extraordinary political rancor over the health care coverage legislation of 2009, known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA), this congressionally mandated provision of the ACA, which was then sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, strongly affirms and validates our individual professional work and AAPM’s commitment. The headline findings by the blue ribbon panel that served on The Committee on Advancing Pain Research, Care, and Education (including AAPM past president, Dr. Ken Follett, and current executive committee member and vice president for scientific affairs, Dr. Sean Mackey) are both stunning in magnitude and shocking in adverse public health impact. These include an estimate that every year, at least 116 million adult Americans experience chronic

pain, and at an annual cost to the nation’s currently fragile economy of up to 635 billion dollars!

In its press release, dated June 29, 2011, the committee “has called for coordinated, national efforts of public and private organizations to create a cultural transformation in how the nation understands and approaches pain management and prevention. Some of the recommended changes can be implemented by the end of 2012 while others should be in place by 2015 and maintained as ongoing efforts.” This seminal report leaves no doubt that chronic pain has finally been recognized as a major public health problem in need of sweeping reforms in education, clinical care delivery systems, and research. Nothing short of a “cultural transformation” will do, and the AAPM strategic plan is well-aligned and positioned to play a crucial role in this process.

As you read through the IOM report, you will find that a series of recommendations have been outlined, along with the people and organizations whose responsibility it is to see that these steps are actualized. We at AAPM have created a crosswalk (Table 1) that identifies the components of our strategic plan that dovetail with the IOM recommendations, and by the conclusion of this year, we will have developed an operational plan with discrete and actionable steps to fulfill our part going forward.

A Harry S. Truman quote, toward the end of the report, states “Progress occurs when courageous, skillful

Table 1 Crosswalk between IOM recommendations and AAPM strategic goals

IOM Report Recommendation	AAPM Mission/Strategic Plan
2.2: Create a comprehensive, population-level strategy for pain prevention, treatment, management, and research	Mission statement: To optimize the health of patients in pain and eliminate the major public health problem of pain by advancing the practice and the specialty of pain medicine
3.2: Develop strategies for reducing barriers to pain care	Goal 2—Professional Education: AAPM will expand its educational offerings in the areas of content, learners and format in a way that reinforces AAPM’s mission.
3.4: Support collaboration between pain specialists and primary care clinicians, including referral to pain centers when appropriate	Goal 2—Professional Education, Objective 1: Increase the quality, quantity, and diversity of education content.
5.1: Designate a lead institute at NIH responsible for moving pain research forward, and increase the support for and scope of the Pain Consortium	Goal 3—Research: AAPM will advocate for and develop research and scholarship programs with a focus on establishing a repository for the information that leads to pain treatment protocols.

AAPM = American Academy of Pain Medicine; NIH = National Institutes of Health; IOM = Institute of Medicine.

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leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.” Each of us can exemplify this form of courageous leadership on a daily basis, by hanging in there with our patients, being steadfast in our belief in them and their desire for a life that is not undermined by debilitating pain. And there is one more exquisitely powerful thing that you can do at this very moment. You can write, call, or email the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, and strongly encourage her to fulfill the charge put forth by the IOM to create a comprehensive, population-level strategy for pain prevention, treatment, management, and research. She can be contacted at:

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201, Toll Free: 1-877-696-6775; E-mail: Kathleen.Sebelius@hhs.gov.

With that, I wish you all a very happy and healthy holiday season!

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Reference

- 1 Institute of Medicine (IOM). Relieving Pain in America: A Blueprint for Transforming Prevention Care Education Research. 2011. Available at: <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2011/Relieving-Pain-in-America-A-Blueprint-for-Transforming-Prevention-Care-Education-Research.aspx> (accessed November 3, 2011).