

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 15, 2003

Contact: Susan M. Thompson  
Director of Marketing & Communications  
[sthompson@painmed.org](mailto:sthompson@painmed.org) 847/375-3686

## **AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PAIN MEDICINE STATEMENT ON RUSH LIMBAUGH**

*NOTE: Medical experts from the American Academy of Pain Medicine are available to speak with journalists seeking information about the risk of addiction from pain medication. Interviews can be arranged by contacting Kris Haskin at 847/375/4731.*

Rush Limbaugh is to be commended for admitting his addiction and seeking medical treatment to deal with his abuse of pain medication.

However, it would compound his personal tragedy if misinformation and exaggerated and unfounded fears of addiction deterred the millions of Americans who suffer from acute and chronic pain from seeking relief.

A person's chance of becoming addicted to pain medication is very low.

Development of addiction to opioids (sometimes called narcotic analgesics) is rarely reported in medical journals, and is much more common in persons who have a family or personal history of addiction.

Addiction, physician dependence and tolerance are different phenomena that are often confused. *Addiction* is defined by use of a medicine even if it causes harm. Additional characteristics of addition include having cravings for a drug, feeling the need to use a drug, and decreased quality of life.

*Physical dependence* is a normal, expected result of using pain medicines for a long time. One who is physically dependent on pain medicine will experience withdrawal symptoms when the medicine is markedly decreased, stopped or reversed.

*Tolerance* means a person will require more medicine to achieve the same amount of pain relief. Tolerance is not ordinarily a problem for most patients with chronic pain.

The American Academy of Pain Medicine is the AMA-recognized specialty society of physicians who practice pain medicine.

###