



## Quality Care at the End of Life

*A position statement from the American Academy of Pain Medicine*

Effective pain and symptom management is an ethical obligation for all healthcare providers and organizations. Fostering effective pain management at the end of life requires the understanding that such care may prolong life, even though these efforts to relieve pain at times may be perceived as hastening death. In all instances where the primary intent of therapeutic interventions is to alleviate pain and suffering and not to cause death, aggressive pain management is ethical and appropriate. No obstacles should be placed in the way of providing this care. In rare circumstances, when pain and suffering are resistant to treatment, sedation may be therapeutic and medically appropriate to obtain relief if consistent with the express wishes of the patient.

Patients, families, caregivers, and physicians continue to struggle with the task of caring for the dying and how best to relieve their suffering. The debate on the moral and medical challenges of care for the dying requires a response. That response demands extraordinary efforts to improve end-of-life care and optimal management of pain and suffering. We have the knowledge and ability to deliver skillful and effective control of pain and suffering at the end of life.

*This statement was prepared by the following AAPM Quality of Care at the End of Life Committee members: Gerald M. Aronoff, MD (Chair); John Banja, PhD; Marshall Bedder, MD FRCP (C); Kerry W. Cranmer, MD CMD; Rollin M. Gallagher, MD MPH; Sandra H. Johnson, JD LL M; Timothy J. Keay, MD MA-Th; and Joel R. Saper, MD.*

*Approved by the AAPM Board of Directors on February 12, 1998.*



4700 W. Lake Avenue  
Glenview, IL 60025-1485  
847/375-4731  
Fax 877/734-8750  
E-mail [aapm@amctec.com](mailto:aapm@amctec.com)  
Web site [www.painmed.org](http://www.painmed.org)