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**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE APRIL 26, 2018
12:00 PM Pacific Time**

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Medicare Data Registry Analysis in IL Reveals Access Barriers, Increased Costs to Patients Seeking Non-Opioid Pain Medications

April 26, 2018, VANCOUVER, B.C, Canada – Several Chicago-based physicians treating pain patients recently performed research in hopes of discerning whether a phenomena that they observed clinically – that it was seemingly more difficult for patients with disabilities to access non-opioid medications than opioid medications to treat painful spasms and neuropathic pain – also played out in available data. The results of their analysis were presented today at the American Academy of Pain Medicine’s 34th Annual Meeting as a scientific poster abstract.

Lead abstract author Allison Glina Przybysz, MD MPH practices at Chicago’s Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital, often caring for patients who are victims of gun violence. Serving this patient population inspired Dr. Glina Przybysz and fellow researchers to better understand the barriers patients have to obtaining the care they need. They turned to Medicare registry data to analyze prescription drug plan formularies in Illinois, looking at first-line pharmacologic pain therapies for common rehabilitations diagnoses. The results indicated that their clinical practice observation was founded: based on Medicare data analysis, patients with disabilities requiring non-opioid medications do appear to face increased barriers to medically necessary pain treatments, including quantity restrictions, the need for prior authorizations, and increased cost, when compared with opioid medications.

“Identifying that a barrier to obtaining certain kinds of medications exists, however, is only the first step,” says Dr. Glina Przybysz, MD MPH. “We must confirm where and the extent to which the problem exists so that future patients may be treated appropriately.”

Dr. Glinka Przybysz hopes that these findings will spur further research in order to break down these barriers. “We should address the disconnect between our treatment algorithms and the medications that are available for us to prescribe without restriction.”

Poster 287 – Access to Pharmacologic Pain Therapies among Patients with Disabilities

About AAPM

The American Academy of Pain Medicine is the premier medical association for pain physicians and their treatment teams with some 2,000 members. Now in its 35th year of service, the Academy's mission is to advance and promote the full spectrum of multidisciplinary pain care, education, advocacy, and research to improve function and quality of life for people in pain. Information is available on the Academy's website at www.painmed.org.

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