

Physician Anesthesiologists Credit Governor for Listening, Moving Forward to Stop Pill Mills

Tallahassee, FL - After three years of intense advocacy by the Florida Society of Anesthesiologists and other organizations, and watching seven people per day die of prescription drug overdoses in Florida, the way has been cleared for Florida's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) to take effect.

FSA would especially like to recognize Governor Rick Scott, who listened to concerns from us and others, and has decided to support the PDMP after first opposing it because of privacy issues. The governor's open-mindedness has been a key toward getting the issue moving forward again.

When someone is prescribed a prescription controlled substance like oxycodone in Florida, doctors and pharmacists must enter that information into the database, allowing their colleagues to see who attempts to shop from doctor to doctor for the same drugs. It also helps to identify unscrupulous pain clinics that work as pill mills, especially because the law establishing the database makes penalties tougher for those who improperly prescribe.

The PDMP was passed in 2010, however, state funds were prohibited by law from being used for its development and operation, and funding is still in question. A PDMP foundation raised over \$1.2 million and more recently Purdue Pharma offered \$1 million, although the latter has been rejected by lawmakers. There are Federal monies available but the PDMP would have to be modified, as proposed by Senate Bill 818, sponsored by Senator Mike Fasano (R-New Port Richey) and is presently on the Senate floor for vote consideration.

A House bill passed on Thursday, April 21, 2011. The bill would prevent the modifications needed to secure the funding that is vital to the existence of the PDMP. The bill does set "strict registration and reporting requirements for practitioners who prescribe controlled substances to treat chronic pain" and "specifies criminal penalties related to unlawful dispensing, theft of and failure to report the loss of controlled substances." However, FSA did not support the House bill due to the limitations on obtaining funding, which could imperil the PDMP's existence.

The Florida Society of Anesthesiologists, and specifically its former president, Rafael Miguel, MD, has been one of the strongest voices in support of the PDMP, which is in effect in more than 30 other states.

"Florida has become the go-to state for those wishing to doctor shop for prescription pain-killers, to either feed their habits or sell on our streets. The database is a huge step toward chasing these individuals out of our state. Its continued financial viability by allowing funding by private and public entities is critical."

Senate President Mike Haridopolos (R-Merritt Island), Senator Fasano, and Attorney General Pam Bondi were also strong voices supporting the database this year.

Members of The Florida Society of Anesthesiologists are physician anesthesiologists working to uphold the highest standards of anesthesia care and patient advocacy, by promoting research, education, and innovation.