



Michael D. Maves, MD, MBA, Executive Vice President, CEO

June 2, 2011

Anna Staton, MPA
Office of Science Policy and Communications
National Institute on Drug Abuse
6001 Executive Boulevard
Suite 5230, MSC 9591
Bethesda, MD 20892-9591

Dear Ms. Staton:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I appreciate the opportunity to provide input for a possible Surgeon General response to the problem of escalating prescription drug abuse among youth. While most abusers are between 18 to 25, younger age groups are also a growing concern.

The AMA suggests the following topics for consideration in a Surgeon General's report:

Background. The report should describe the extent of the problem and its health and social consequences to youth and society, and address the following questions: What are the demographic, social and psychological characteristics of youth affected? How do youth gain access to prescription drugs? Which medications are implicated?

Role of Families in Contributing to or Reducing the Problem. What behaviors or symptoms should they pay attention to in their children? What protective measures could families take, such as proper storage and disposal of prescription drugs? For example, teenagers should not be able to go into the (unlocked) bathroom medicine cabinet and find opioids. Since family and parenting programs have been effective in other drug programs, describe their applicability to this problem.

Clinical Interventions. Physicians play a key role in providing screening, brief interventions, and counseling to youth and their parents. What role can emergency departments, schools, and school-based health centers play? Describe successful prevention and treatment programs.

Highlight Clinical Resources and Practices. Examples might include the AMA's continuing medical education modules and a video vignette on prescription drug abuse with tips for physicians on how to educate and counsel patients on prevention of medication misuse and diversion. The report should address opioids in pain management, the intersection of pain

Anna Staton, MPA

June 2, 2011

Page 2

management and drug misuse or addiction among youth, and the use of physician clinical support systems.

Regulation and Policy. What policy options exist at the local, state and federal level? The AMA supports state-based prescription drug monitoring programs that can help identify doctor shoppers.

Educational Messaging. Consider best practices from broader drug abuse or other prevention fields to craft messages for segments of the youth population, parents, and community stakeholders on the dangers, as well as measures to reduce drug abuse. What can schools and community organizations do to educate youth and to identify those at risk? What is the role of popular culture, social media, and music in fostering or reducing the problem?

Enforcement. What are the appropriate roles for interdiction and enforcement? Might campaigns to reduce driving while under the influence of drugs be coordinated with existing initiatives for driving while under the influence of alcohol? Describe penalties and alternatives to incarceration.

Surveillance and Research. There are needs for ongoing surveillance of the problem and evaluation to demonstrate and promote model programs in medical practice and the community and how they may be applied in diverse settings.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Maves". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael D. Maves, MD, MBA