

NATIONAL PAIN CARE POLICY ACT OF 2009, H.R. 756 and S. 660

BILL SUMMARY

Pain is the most common reason Americans access the health care system and is a leading contributor to health care costs. Pain is also a leading cause of disability. Most painful conditions can be relieved with proper treatment, and providing adequate pain management is a crucial component of improving and maintaining quality of life for patients, survivors, and their loved ones. Yet people in pain often face significant barriers that can prevent proper assessment, diagnosis, treatment and management of their pain. The National Pain Care Policy Act of 2009 is designed to address many of these barriers by improving pain care research, education, training, access, outreach and care.

INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE CONFERENCE ON PAIN CARE

Section 2 authorizes an Institute of Medicine Conference on Pain Care to:

- Increase awareness of pain as a significant public health problem;
- Evaluate the adequacy of pain assessment, treatment and management;
- Identify barriers to appropriate pain care including physician concerns over regulatory and law enforcement policies;
- Establish an action agenda to address barriers and improve pain care research, education, training and clinical care;
- Highlight disparities in pain care specific to populations that are disproportionately under-treated for pain; and
- Report to Congress on findings and recommendations.

PAIN RESEARCH AT NIH

Section 3 encourages the Director of NIH to continue and expand, through the Pain Consortium, an aggressive program of basic and clinical research on the causes of and potential treatments for pain.

- Requires the Pain Consortium to submit annual recommendations to the Director of NIH for appropriate pain research initiative that could be undertaken with the Common Fund.
- Establishes a Interagency Pain Research Coordinating Committee to coordinate all efforts within the Department of HHS and other Federal agencies that relate to pain research. The Coordinating Committee is charged with identifying critical gaps in pain research, eliminating duplication of efforts at HHS and other federal agencies, and expanding collaborative pain research across federal agencies and the private sector. Membership in the committee will include critical representation from outside of government

PAIN CARE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Section 4 creates a grant program to improve health professionals' understanding and ability to assess and appropriately treat pain:

- Physician specialty groups and academic institutions involved in pain care will have the primary responsibility of collecting and disseminating protocols for evidence-based practices regarding pain; and
- Authorizes the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to provide grants for development and implementation of programs to educate and train professionals in pain assessment and care. HRSA is to evaluate such programs to determine their effect on knowledge and practice of pain care.

PAIN MANAGEMENT PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Section 5 requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop and implement a national outreach and awareness campaign to educate consumers, patients, families and other caregivers on the:

- Significance of pain as a national public health problem;
- Risks to patients if pain is not properly assessed and treated;
- Availability, benefits, and risks of treatment and management options;
- Importance of having pain assessed and treated;
- Role of pain management specialists;
- Resources available to patients and other consumers to help in dealing with pain;
- Prevalence and causes of disparities in pain management among underserved populations; and
- Requires an evaluation and report on the campaign's effectiveness.

In designing the program, the bill emphasizes the need to reach underserved populations and to provide resources that will reduce disparities in access to appropriate pain treatment.