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August is National Pain Awareness Month

Association for Compassionate Transformation Launches Community Pain Awareness Campaign

SAN DIEGO/CALIFORNIA—During August 2009, communities across the nation will observe National Pain Awareness Month. The month of August is a period to focus our awareness on a condition that affects individuals, their families and society in general. Chronic pain is considered to be the most costly health problem in the United States.¹ Increased medical expenses, lost income, lost productivity, compensation payments, and legal charges are some of the negative economic consequences of chronic pain. Along with financial ramifications, chronic pain impacts one's emotional state and relationships.

The goal of National Pain Awareness Month is to provide education about the proper use of pain medications for both patients and health care providers. In addition, the National Pain Foundation is committed to reducing patient injury related to pain medication and the number of unintentional overdoses or deaths caused by such therapies. Sadly, many celebrities such as Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe and Michael Jackson's sudden death may have been the result of their prescription medication misuse related to managing pain.²

Overcoming suffering and pain is very challenging and can seem impossible. Maintaining hope and increasing understanding of one's chronic pain condition and the treatment options available to the individual are two critical keys to living with pain.

The National Pain Foundation has outlined six steps to safely take chronic pain medication.

- 1. Never take a prescription painkiller unless it is prescribed to you.** All individuals respond uniquely to pain medications. What is safe for one individual may not be safe for another.
- 2. Do not take pain medicine with alcohol.** Never mix the pain medication with alcohol; it is a dangerous combination that can be fatal. Alcohol increases the toxicity of pain medication.
- 3. Do not take more doses than prescribed.** Despite that the after effects of pain medication seem to have worn off, the medication can still depress the respiratory system. The body must develop a tolerance to the respiratory depressant effects before the dose can be increased. If you are still experiencing unmanageable pain, speak to your health care provider!
- 4. Use of other sedative or anti-anxiety medications can be dangerous.** As with alcohol, combining pain medicines with other sedative drugs can increase the toxicity of the pain medication. Share with your health care provider all medications you are taking. Also, only take other medications if directed by your health care provider.
- 5. Avoid using prescription painkillers to fall to sleep.** Prescription pain medications can suppress respiration during sleep. Talk to your health care provider about safe methods to manage pain during sleep.
- 6. Lock up prescription painkillers.** If you have medication in your home, you have a responsibility to protect your children, family and the general public from misuse. Prescription pain medicine can kill if consumed by people for whom it was not prescribed.

1. National Pain Foundation, www.nationalpainfoundation.org
2. The American Academy of Pain Medication, www.painmed.org

By increasing the nation's knowledge regarding chronic pain, communities can help support, protect and empower patients and their families to manage their pain and sustain a good quality of life.

A.C.T. will provide information on dealing with the emotional effects of chronic pain to promote awareness and public education about chronic pain during the annual observance. For more information, please contact Dr. Drecun at Dr.Drecun@a4ct.com or (858) 792-3541.

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