



October 18, 2016

Utah State Health and Human Services Committee,

The escalation of death rates related to opiate misuse is a concern to all health care practitioners. Utah Nurse Practitioners (UNP) is eager to join the collaborative effort in assisting the Health and Human Services Committee of the Utah State Legislature to find a workable solution for the state of Utah. UNP realizes that the current Healthcare culture has many challenges. UNP believes that prescribers and patients have the ability to work safely and harmoniously in the treatment of chronic pain.

Nurse Practitioners have taken the first step, leading other prescribers by using the CSD as evidenced by our recently passed legislation which includes using the Controlled Substance Database as a tool in proper prescribing. Nurse Practitioners are among the safest prescribers of opiates. Patients who require high dose opiates should be working with an experienced pain practice prescriber and monitored closely. Nurse Practitioners are committed to following the CDC and Utah Department of Health guidelines for the prescription of pain medications, especially opiates including consulting the Controlled Substance Database prior to prescribing, frequent random drug testing, counseling, and incorporating non-opiate and non-medication treatments for pain. Moreover, The Utah Nurse Practitioners Association legislation was seen to lead the way in curbing the current opiate overuse and misuse epidemic. UNP encourages all prescribers, to continue their efforts to keep opiate dosing within standard practice guidelines and utilize every resource available to help ensure safety when prescribing opiate medications. UNP also understands that individual exceptions are sometimes needed and should be made with careful thought and consideration by both the patient and prescriber.

There are alternatives treatments to opiates as well as abuse deterrent formulations of opiates that can, and should be considered, in the treatment of ongoing pain. Abuse deterrent formulations are designed to release naloxone when the medication is tampered with, thereby preventing abusers from obtaining euphoria when the medication is snorted or injected. UNP would support legislation that required high dose opiates to be prescribed in abuse-deterrent forms as well as the use of safer forms of medications as they are developed. UNP will continue to lead the way to identify and incorporate the safe use of opiates and other non-opiate modalities in the treatment of pain in our communities.

Kindly consider these recommendations,

Utah Nurse Practitioners