



ALABAMA BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS NEWSLETTER

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The Oxycontin Dilemma

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To the media, a breaking story. To chronic and terminal pain sufferers, relief. To conscientious physicians, an effective treatment of pain. To the manufacturer, a financial success. To pharmacists, fear. To the drug abuser and addict, an instant rush and euphoria—or death; to their families, grief. To drug diverters, ill-gotten gains. To treatment centers, an epidemic. To law enforcement, the latest in a long series of drug problems.

OxyContin is all these things!

OxyContin™ (oxycodone in a controlled-release form) was introduced in 1996 by Purdue Pharma and has found wide acceptance for the management of pain. It is available in 10mg, 20mg, 40mg, 80mg and 160mg strengths and, unlike its faster acting counterpart, it contains no aspirin or acetaminophen. Unhappily, OxyContin also has found favor with addicts, who crush the tablets for snorting or dissolve them for intravenous injection, either of which delivers an immediate high dose of oxycodone. Oxycontin has been compared to heroin, itself a very effective opiate analgesic, but banned in this country because of its abuse potential.

To determine how addictive a drug is, it is often useful to assess its “street value.” As a reflection of its current popularity, sixty 40mg tablets of OxyContin, which retail for about \$300, can bring \$2400 on the black market. This indicates that OxyContin is highly addictive and valued for its euphoric high by illicit users. The 40mg tablet is the most commonly diverted, with addicts entering treatment typically reporting

doses of 200 to 300mg a day (although intravenous doses of more than 900mg a day have been reported)¹.

The presence of aspirin or acetaminophen, added to enhance analgesic potential in the older fast acting versions of Oxycodone (i.e. Percodan™ or Percocet™), while potentially toxic if used in high dose, may have coincidentally helped keep these products from being as greatly misused. It is a tragic irony that the more effective and less toxic the drug, the more addictive and dangerous for addicts and illicit abusers.

A Media Sensation

Current headlines about extensive OxyContin diversion and abuse have focused on geographic “hot spots,” including Alabama, Virginia, eastern Kentucky, West Virginia, Cincinnati and rural areas of Ohio, and areas of Maine. Since the story first broke in the national media in January, OxyContin has been the subject of major network news programs and feature articles in *Time* (“The Potent Perils of a Miracle Drug,” Jan. 8) and *U.S. News and World Report* (“The ‘poor man’s heroin,’ An Ohio surgeon helps feed a growing addiction to OxyContin,” Feb. 12). Media interest in OxyContin abuse has been stoked by dramatic law enforcement operations (“OxyFest 2001” in eastern Kentucky made national news when it led to the arrests of 207 persons in one day in February) and stories of drug-related deaths (59 reported in Kentucky in 2000 and the first two months of 2001). Southwestern Virginia and eastern Kentucky appear to have particularly severe problems with OxyContin abuse and diversion. In Southwestern Virginia,

**“WE NO LONGER
STOCK OXYCONTIN”**

see *OxyContin* page two

OxyContin *continued*

Tazewell County (population 45,000) Commonwealth's Attorney Dennis Lee told an interviewer that his office brought about 150 felony charges related to OxyContin between August 1999 and August 2000, and that about half of all felony charges in the preceding 18 months were OxyContin-related. Offenses included 12 to 15 armed robberies in a three-county area, and two dozen break-ins of pharmacies in Tazewell County alone. As a result, some area pharmacies have posted window signs announcing that they no longer stock OxyContin, and some doctors have decided to no longer prescribe the drug ("Doctors stop prescribing OxyContin," *Birmingham News*, April 2, 2001 - *Abuse of the painkiller OxyContin has taken almost a dozen lives in Alabama; now some doctors are taking a stand against abusers*). This is a real setback to local patients who use the drug for its intended purpose.

"The robber asked for only one thing when he walked into a pharmacy with a mask over his head and an automatic rifle in his hands: OxyContin."

No Solution in Sight

Better education, stronger enforcement, increased regulation, tighter controls: these are some of the efforts being suggested, but no one is optimistic. The very qualities of some drugs that make them safe and effective also make them addictive and dangerous. This is the problem that has existed with addictive drugs for decades. They are potent and effective at what they do. It is how they are used or misused that is the problem.

¹ NcNeer, MD ASAM News, March-April 2001, page 7■

Do you know the guidelines issued by the Board when evaluating for the use of controlled substances for pain control?

Find the answer on our web site at:

www.albme.org

Scroll down to the "Rules, Policies, Newsletters" section and then click on "Administrative Rules." Then click on "Rules and Regulations of the Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners" and then click on "Chapter 4 - Controlled Substances Certificate" which will open an Adobe Acrobat pdf file. Chapter 540-X-4-.08 deals with the "Guidelines for the Use of Controlled Substances for the Treatment of Pain."

The Alabama State Board of
Medical Examiners
and Medical Licensure Commission
of Alabama
invites you to visit our web site at:

www.albme.org

and obtain:

Licensure Verification Online using
"Docfinder" (a searchable database)
Disciplinary Actions (Updated monthly)
Administrative Rules & Regulations
Policy Opinions
Alabama Statutes
Current Board Members

Medical Licensure Commission Public Action Report January through March 2001

On January 24, 2001, the Medical Licensure Commission entered an Order which temporarily suspended the Alabama medical license of Joseph Ayer Beckwin, M.D., license number 12480.

On January 24, 2001, the Medical Licensure Commission entered the Stipulation and Consent Order, which issued a reprimand and assessed an administrative fine in the amount of \$1,500.00 to Howard Zvei Arian, M.D., license number 13267.

On January 24, 2001, the Medical Licensure Commission entered a Stipulation and Consent Order, which issued a reprimand and assessed an administrative fine in the amount of \$500.00 to William Madison Harper, M.D., license number 10803.

On January 24, 2001, the Medical Licensure Commission entered an Order which issued to Dr. Kenneth Barngrover a reprimand and assessed an administrative fine in the amount of \$500.00. Dr. Barngrover's Alabama license number is DO-96.

On January 30, 2001, the Medical Licensure Commission entered an Order which revoked the Alabama medical license of Allan Christopher Walls, M.D., license number 17151.

On January 30, 2001, the Medical Licensure Commission entered an Order which amended the Commission's previous probationary order regarding Donald Pittard McCurdy, M.D., license number 17085.

On January 30, 2001, the Medical Licensure Commission entered an Order which issued a full unrestricted medical license to Marla H. Wool, M.D., license number 15075.

On March 7, 2001, the Medical Licensure Commission entered an Order which revoked the medical license of Elmer L. Eley, M.D., license number 10543.■

Alabama Board of Medical Examiners Public Action Report January through March 2001

On January 2, 2001, the Board entered an Order removing the voluntary restrictions previously attached to the certificate of qualification and license to practice medicine in Alabama of Milton R. Raines, M. D., license number 5465, Gulfport MS.

On January 17, 2001, the Board accepted the voluntary surrender of the certificate of qualification and license to practice medicine in Alabama of Michael Roy Whittle, license number 9247, Cordele GA. Dr. Whittle is no longer authorized to practice medicine in Alabama.

On January 22, 2001, the Board entered an Order revoking the license to practice as a physician assistant in Alabama of Edwin Sanders, P. A., license number PA-118, Brandon MS. Mr. Sanders is no longer authorized to practice as a physician assistant in Alabama.

On February 21, 2001, the Board accepted the voluntary surrender of the certificate of qualification and license to practice medicine in Alabama of Denny Ray Lambert, M. D., license number 17840, Eglin FL. Dr. Lambert is no longer authorized to practice medicine in Alabama.

On February 21, 2001, the Board accepted the voluntary surrender of the Alabama Controlled Substances Certificate of George C. Douglas, M. D., license number 2597, Fulton AL. Dr. Douglas is no longer authorized to prescribe controlled substances in Alabama.

On February 21, 2001, the Board accepted the voluntary surrender of the Alabama Controlled Substances Certificate of Bill Vern Hewitt, M. D., license number 3606, Huntsville AL. Dr. Hewitt is no longer authorized to prescribe controlled substances in Alabama.■

Alabama Board of Medical Examiners NEWSLETTER is published quarterly for physicians who hold a license to practice medicine or osteopathy in the state of Alabama. The newsletter is designed to keep the licensed physicians of Alabama updated as to developments in the regulation of the practice of medicine in this state. The Board welcomes your comments, questions or other input.

Larry Dixon, Executive Director, P.O. Box 946, Montgomery, AL 36101-0946 or call (334) 242-4116 or fax (334) 242-4155. Please visit our web site: www.albme.org.

CME CALENDAR 2001

May 31-June 2

AL Chpt. ACP-ASIM Annual Scientific Meeting

Perdido Beach Resort

Contact: Charlotte Brown (205) 934-5191

June 1-3

AL Chpt. ACC Annual Meeting

Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort, Destin, FL

Contact: AL Chapter American College of Cardiology, Dee Mooty (334) 263-6441

June 10-14

AAFP Annual Meeting

Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort, Destin, FL

Contact: Holley Midgley 1-800-239-6272 or (334) 263-6441

June 12-16

General Surgery Update

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina

Contact: Lloyd Noland Foundation, George Converse, M.D. (205) 783-8181

CME Credit: 19 hours Category 1 (AMA, AAFP)

June 19-23

Adult Infectious Disease Seminar "Current Update"

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina

Contact: Lloyd Noland Foundation, George Converse, M.D. (205) 783-8181

CME Credit: 19 hours Category 1 (AMA, AAFP)

June 25-28

AL Chpt. ACEP 18th Annual Meeting and Conference

Sandestin Hilton, Destin, FL

Contact: AL Chapter American College of Emergency Physicians, Leland Holman (334) 265-0068

CME Credit: 15 Category 1 AMA/ACEP

June 26-30

Pediatric Infectious Disease Seminar

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina

Contact: Lloyd Noland Foundation, George Converse, M.D. (205) 783-8181

CME Credit: 19 hours Category 1 (AMA, AAFP)

June 28-July 1

Medical Association of the State of Alabama Annual Session

"Spirituality, Collegiality and Service in Medicine"

Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort, Destin, FL

Contact: Diane Oetting (334) 263-6441 or 1-800-239-6272

June 28-July 1

Dermatology on the Beach

Sandestin Hilton Beach Hotel, Destin, FL

Contact: AL Dermatology Society, Eric W. Baum, M.D. (256) 543-2380

July 3-7

Family Practice Seminar "Update & Review"

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina

Contact: Lloyd Noland Foundation, George Converse, M.D. (205) 783-8181

CME Credit: 19 hours Category 1 (AMA, AAFP)

July 10-14

Anesthesiology Update

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina

Contact: Lloyd Noland Foundation, George Converse, M.D. (205) 783-8181

CME Credit: 19 hours Category 1 (AMA, AAFP)

July 17-20

AL Academy of Ophthalmology Annual Meeting

Sandestin Hilton, FL

Contact: Leigh Jones (334) 269-9900

July 17-21

Internal Medicine Update

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina

Contact: Lloyd Noland Foundation, George Converse, M.D. (205) 783-8181

CME Credit: 19 hours Category 1 (AMA, AAFP)

July 27-29

MASA 2001 Regionals

"Adolescence – Physical & Emotional Development"

Guntersville, AL

Contact: MASA Ed Dept (334) 263-6441 or 1-800-239-6272

August 3-5

MASA 2001 Regionals

"Adolescence – Physical & Emotional Development"

Gulf Shores, AL

Contact: MASA Ed Dept (334) 263-6441 or 1-800-239-6272

August 10-12

AL Society of Allergy, Asthma &

Immunology Annual Meeting

Sandestin Hilton, Destin, FL

Contact: Richard Carson (334) 263-6441 or 1-800-239-6272

August 16 (6-8 pm)

Medical Errors and Malpractice Litigation

Decatur, Decatur General Hospital

Contact: Medical Assurance, Gina Preston, 1-800-282-6242

CME Credit: 2 hours Category 1

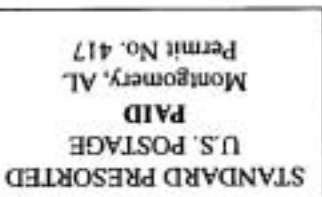
October 11 (6-8 pm)

Medical Errors and Malpractice Litigation

Birmingham, St. Vincent's Hospital, Bruno Conference Center

Contact: Medical Assurance, Gina Preston, 1-800-282-6242

CME Credit: 2 hours Category 1



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