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N E W S

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OHIO COMPASSIONATE CARE TASK FORCE

COLUMBUS – The findings and recommendations of the Ohio Compassionate Care Task Force were released in a report today at the Ohio Department of Health (ODH).

According to the report, chronic pain is among the most disabling and costly afflictions in the United States, yet it is also the most under-funded major health problem.

The cost of lost productivity due to pain is estimated at \$61.2 billion annually. When medical costs are added, the annual cost of pain is upward of \$120 billion.

The report also points out the need for expanding and responding to end-of-life care is growing rapidly. Individuals are living longer, yet our culture fails to promote effective planning for the end of life.

“As the saying goes, only two things in life are certain, death and taxes,” said J. Nick Baird, M.D., director ODH. “The unfortunate thing the task force discovered is most people, including the medical community, don’t talk about death, let alone plan for it.”

The task force stressed the importance of increasing education for health care professionals on recognizing and properly managing pain and the need for palliative care.

The study revealed patient preferences are often not known or honored, patients and family members are not accurately informed of the prognosis, pain at the end of life is often under-treated and death too often occurs in intensive care unit settings.

“Everyone should be provided appropriate pain control – whether they’re suffering chronic pain or facing a terminal illness,” said Anita Jackson, a public representative on the task force. “Without increased medication my son would have died a horribly painful death.”

“Lack of education on the part of health care professionals seems to be the largest barrier to appropriate pain and symptom management and palliative care,” said Warren Wheeler, M.D., co-chair, Ohio Compassionate Care Task Force. “Health care professionals and people in pain or facing depression have the responsibility to inform themselves and openly discuss pain. Fear of addiction should not be a barrier to appropriate pain management.”

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The task force held nine town hall meetings across the state to solicit input from persons dealing with terminal illness or severe chronic pain and health care professionals caring for them. From those meetings several issues arose: professional issues leading to under-treatment of pain, patient factors interfering with receiving adequate pain management, professional factors interfering with appropriate care of the terminally ill and system issues interfering with pain management and palliative care.

The Compassionate Care Task Force was created in Dec., 2002 after the Ohio General Assembly enacted House Bill 474 recognizing the importance of addressing terminal illness and severe chronic pain. The task force is charged with studying and making recommendations concerning issues surrounding the treatment and care of persons with terminal illness or severe chronic pain.

More information and a copy of the report can be found at: <http://www.ohiopaininitiative.org/>

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