

# **Governmental Affairs & Public Policy**

**Statement of Harold C. Sox, Jr., MD, FACP, Immediate Past President**

## **The Conquering Pain Act of 1999**

**May 3, 1999**

Good morning. I am Harold Sox. I am a general internist and Immediate Past President of the American College of Physicians -- American Society of Internal Medicine (ACP-ASIM). Our organization is the nation's largest medical specialty society with over 110,000 members who practice internal medicine and its subspecialties. Our members provide the majority of care for adults.

I am here today to express our support for the Conquering Pain Act of 1999.

Far too many Americans suffer from severe pain. In fact, estimates show that over 75% of patients with advanced stages of cancer suffer moderate, severe, or very severe pain. A recent study found that for 50% of conscious patients who died in the hospital, family members reported that the patient was in moderate to severe pain at least half the time.

The ACP-ASIM has developed a multi-faceted program to increase awareness of pain management among our internist members and medical residents. But we can't do it alone. A problem of this magnitude requires a federal presence.

That's why enactment of the Conquering Pain Act is crucial. It explicitly recognizes the federal responsibility to help ensure that patients who suffer from pain receive the best possible care. It adopts both a short term and long term approach.

For example, your bill contains several provisions that will provide physicians and other health care professionals with access to the latest information about how to assess and treat pain. Consequently, patients and their families will see the results almost immediately. It also holds the health care system accountable for responding to patient concerns and improving pain treatment. This, too, should lead to rapid improvements in care.

Moreover, by coordinating the activities of the federal government, supporting research on pain and the best ways to translate research findings into practice, as well as studying Medicare payment policies and the regulatory barriers that impede effective pain management, the Conquering Pain Act of 1999 will provide a road map for policy makers as they develop long-term solutions.

Your bill is a proposal whose time has come.

Senators Wyden and Mack, and all the other leaders who have worked on this bill, thank you for your efforts. The ACP-ASIM looks forward to working with you to get this bill enacted as well as on other initiatives to improve care for patients who are chronically ill or at the end of life.