



The Susan G. Komen  
Breast Cancer Foundation

**L I V E S T R O N G**<sup>™</sup>  
LANCE ARMSTRONG FOUNDATION



Pain & Policy Studies Group

University of Wisconsin Comprehensive Cancer Center

World Health Organization Collaborating Center  
for Policy and Communications in Cancer Care

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## **Top Cancer Groups Fund Study of State Pain Policies**

### **Komen Foundation, Lance Armstrong Foundation and American Cancer Society View Adequate Pain Relief as Key Quality of Life Issue**

Chronic pain is a part of daily life for more than 50 percent of all cancer patients and survivors and for more than 75 percent of those with advanced stages of the disease – figures that have remained unchanged for decades, despite advances in therapeutic options to address pain. In an unprecedented effort to promote better pain control, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, the Lance Armstrong Foundation (LAF) and the American Cancer Society announce the joint funding of a nationwide project to evaluate pain management policies in the states.

The organizations, which represent the nation's leading information and advocacy groups for people with cancer, are funding a three-year grant to the Pain & Policy Studies Group (PPSG) at the University of Wisconsin Comprehensive Cancer Center to examine policies that govern pain management practices for cancer patients in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

PPSG will issue three report cards during the life of the grant that grade states on their pain policies. The first report card will be issued in September.

“Pain management and symptom control are critically important quality of life issues for all cancer patients,” said Patrice Tosi, acting chief executive officer, chief operating officer and executive vice president of the Komen Foundation. “The report card issued by PPSG will be essential to clarify where pain management disparities remain, so they can be addressed.”

“LAF’s manifesto states that we believe in the right to live without pain, a principle with which our partners in this project agree,” said Mitch Stoller, LAF president and chief executive officer. “It is essential that cancer patients have access to adequate pain management from the time of their diagnosis, throughout their treatment and as needed for the balance of their lives.”

“The American Cancer Society has long advocated for stronger policies affecting cancer pain control in states across the country,” said John R. Seffrin, PhD, the Society's chief executive officer. “We view this joint project as an important step toward enhancing the quality of life for cancer patients, survivors and their families.”

PPSG is headed by David E. Joranson, MSSW, and Aaron M. Gilson, PhD, internationally known experts on pain control policy who implemented a first-of-its-kind study in 2003 comparing pain policies throughout the country. The results of that study, reported in *Achieving Balance in State Pain Policy: A Progress Report Card*, showed that more than half of all states

had policies that encouraged pain management, addressed physicians' fears of regulatory scrutiny and drew distinctions between physical dependence or tolerance and addiction.

But the report also showed that much more progress can be made. A total of 38 states received a grade of C or worse, demonstrating inadequacies in their pain management policies. Many states reacted to the 2003 report by amending their policies to be more balanced. PPSG has collaborated with health care professionals, non-governmental organizations and government officials to help adopt policies that promote the appropriate use of pain medications. The grant announced today is intended to identify where progress is needed to encourage positive momentum for pain relief and palliative care.

Cancer is the disease Americans fear most, and pain is one of the most common symptoms of cancer. Untreated pain can have a significant negative impact on quality of life, affecting one's ability to concentrate, perform on the job, exercise, socialize, sleep, perform household chores and engage in sexual relations. Additional details about pain as a public health problem are attached.

For more information on the University of Wisconsin's Pain and Policy Studies Group, visit [www.medsch.wisc.edu/painpolicy](http://www.medsch.wisc.edu/painpolicy).

#### **About the Lance Armstrong Foundation**

The Lance Armstrong Foundation (LAF) inspires and empowers people affected by cancer. We help people with cancer focus on living; we believe that unity is strength, knowledge is power and attitude is everything. From the moment of diagnosis, the LAF provides the practical information and tools people with cancer need to live life on their own terms. The LAF serves its mission through advocacy, public health and research. Founded in 1997 by cancer survivor and champion cyclist Lance Armstrong, the LAF is located in Austin, Texas. For more information, visit [www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org).

#### **About the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation**

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation was established in 1982 by Nancy Brinker to honor the memory of her sister, Susan G. Komen, who died from breast cancer at the age of 36. Today, the Foundation is an international organization with a network of more than 75,000 volunteers working through local Affiliates and events like the Komen Race for the Cure® to eradicate breast cancer as a life-threatening disease. A global leader in the fight against breast cancer, the Foundation fulfills its mission through support of innovative breast cancer research grants, meritorious awards and educational, scientific and community outreach programs around the world. Through fiscal year 2005, the Komen Foundation, together with its Affiliate Network, corporate partners and generous donors, has invested \$630 million in breast cancer research, education, screening and treatment programs. For questions about breast health or breast cancer, visit the Komen Foundation's Web site at [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org) or call the Komen Foundation's National Toll-Free Breast Care Helpline at 1.800 I'M AWARE® (1.800.462.9273).

#### **About the American Cancer Society**

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, the Society has 13 regional Divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across America. For more information anytime, call toll free 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

## **Background Information on Pain as a Public Health Problem**

### **Is pain a serious problem?**

The American Pain Foundation reports that more than 50 million Americans suffer from chronic pain, including pain associated with the disease of cancer. Pain is one of the most common physical complaints upon a person's admission into the healthcare system, and moderate to severe pain is frequently reported to be experienced throughout hospitalization, during treatment, and even after discharge. The costs of pain, both emotional and financial, can be enormous. Untreated or undertreated pain can devastate the person's quality of life by diminishing their function, productivity, or ability to interact socially, and can happen at any stage of life. According to a recent estimate published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, unrelieved pain annually exceeds \$61 billion dollars in lost productivity. Considering these tremendous adverse consequences, unremitting pain is recognized as a significant public health problem in the U.S.

### **Are there policies that impede medical use of pain medications?**

Although a variety of treatment options exist and can be effective in reducing cancer pain, opioid medications often are the cornerstone of treatment. Unfortunately, patients with chronic pain are frequently unable to receive such treatment. Part of the reason for this problem is that there are policies in each state that govern healthcare practice, including pain management, and when such policies unduly restrict healthcare practice they can interfere with patient access to effective pain treatment. Even when pain medications are available and healthcare professionals are knowledgeable and comfortable about their appropriate use, adequate pain relief may be difficult to achieve when state policies create treatment barriers for patients, including those with cancer.

### **How can policies be improved?**

To improve the environment for all patients with pain, an evaluation and grading system has been developed to grade and rank state policies governing pain management, in particular the use of pain medications. The evaluation and grading system is based on the concept of Balance, which is the obligation of governments to create policies that achieve two important goals: (1) prevent abuse and diversion of medications, and (2) ensure their availability for legitimate medical purposes. Efforts to control abuse and diversion should not interfere with the public health goal of appropriate pain relief and patient care when using pain medications. As a result, state policies that govern healthcare practice must not be unduly restrictive and should not contradict current professional and scientific knowledge about the treatment of pain.

### **How are state policies evaluated and graded?**

The grading system ranges from A to F. A higher grade represents more balanced policy that is consistent with modern medical standards. Lower grades mean the presence of policies that restrict healthcare decision-making, contradict current medical knowledge, and do not communicate appropriate messages about pain management and using pain medications. The last time we graded and ranked states, in 2003, 35 percent had a grade of C, while 41 percent scored above a C and 24 percent fell below a C; no state received a grade of A or F. Given the types of policy change that we have witnessed in the last three years, we anticipate that policies in many states will have improved but that more change will be needed for most states.

### **Why are state policies important?**

Improving state policy is a necessary complement to the many ongoing state-level initiatives designed to educate healthcare professionals about the appropriate use of pain medications and to inform the general public about the availability of pain treatment options. Most importantly, improving state policy will remove barriers and enhance appropriate access to pain medications for people who experience moderate to severe cancer pain during the course of their illness and beyond. If there is a healthcare professional willing to prescribe, and a patient with cancer willing to use the medication, we do not want restrictive state policy to stand in the way.