

# **SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH PARITY LEGISLATION**

## **POSITION:**

The American Pain Society (APS) supports Congressional efforts to provide mental health and substance abuse treatment parity in commercial health insurance. Removing such barriers allows pain care patients to be treated for co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders.

APS is a multidisciplinary organization of basic and clinical scientists, practicing clinicians, policy analysts and others who research and treat pain and advocate for patients with pain. Its mission is to advance pain-related research, education, treatment and professional practice.

## **JUSTIFICATION:**

Pain is associated with a wide range of injury and disease, and is sometimes the disease itself. Millions suffer from acute or chronic pain every year and the effects of pain exact a tremendous cost on our country in health care costs, rehabilitation and lost worker productivity as well as the emotional and financial burden it places on patients and their families.

Amongst other issues, APS is concerned interventions for pain can be rendered less effective in the presence of co-morbid conditions such as disorders of mood, substance use/abuse, somatization, mania, and personality disorders. Such co-morbid conditions need to be addressed prior to and/or concurrently with pain. Treatments for co-morbid conditions should not be confused with the pain intervention itself. For example, psychological and behavioral approaches used to treat pain are quite different from the treatment protocols used for depression or substance abuse. Relatedly, costs associated with the treatment of pain and the treatment of co-morbid conditions should not be intertwined. Currently, access to and reimbursement for treatments addressing these co-morbid conditions is inadequate to facilitate optimal management of pain and the co-morbid conditions.

As such, APS is concerned about the lack of access to mental health services resulting from arbitrary benefit limits on mental health services under private health insurance as compared to general medical/surgical services. Such an inequity creates barriers to care for patients who require treatment that is both efficacious and cost-effective.

Parity in insurance encourages early intervention and appropriate care when medically necessary to avoid recurrent health problems. Granting greater access to mental health and addiction treatment, including access to medically necessary pain care services, and prohibiting discriminatory insurance practices improves the overall health of all Americans.

## **REQUEST:**

To overcome barriers to patients seeking treatment for co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, APS requests that you cosponsor legislation such as H.R 1367 & S. 558 which provide parity between health insurance coverage of mental health benefits and benefits for medical and surgical services.