

## **THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT PAIN TREATMENT:**

The Drug Enforcement Administration recently posted new guidelines on the DEA website to stop the unjustified harassment and prosecution of pain doctors.

## **THE BAD NEWS ABOUT PAIN TREATMENT:**

Two months later the DEA deleted the guidelines, citing unspecified "misstatements."

No one knows why the DEA suddenly withdrew its own rules -- the Agency isn't talking. But it may have been the fact that the guidelines protected doctors from prosecution if they unwittingly prescribed opiates to addicts who deceived them. The government is currently prosecuting several physicians for exactly that conduct.

Over 30 million Americans suffer from chronic pain. A great many may need double or triple the normal amount of medication -- and they are almost always under-treated. These people could legitimately get relief with opioid drugs but they can't find doctors willing to prescribe enough to kill the pain. Taking opioids for pain relief rarely leads to addiction but

physicians fear that prescribing large doses will attract the attention of over zealous federal agents, a risk that includes lengthy prison terms. So victims of severe accidents, failed surgery, terminal cancer, and the like are often left to writhe in agony.

Over the last two years the DEA tried to address this crisis, working with medical specialists from the University of Wisconsin's Pain and Policy Studies Group. They set guidelines that would both instruct and safeguard physicians, allowing them to prescribe adequate levels of pain medication without fear of harassment.

These guidelines or something like them should be reinstated so that no one has to suffer needlessly.

**Common Sense for Drug Policy**  
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