



## ACTION ALERT

### **Newsweek Article Reinforces Negative Pain Stigmas**

Dear American Pain Foundation (APF) members,

*Newsweek.com* recently ran an article titled, "Prescription Nation: Why we should worry about prescription drug abuse," that was not only one-sided and focused on deaths from pain medication abuse and misuse, but ultimately reinforced the stigmas and stereotypes associated with pain and pain management. With a readership of more than four million, this alarmist article only contributes to barriers for people in pain. While abuse and misuse of prescription medicines are a serious safety concern, with often devastating consequences, writer Raina Kelley failed to explore and share personal accounts from some people with pain whose needless suffering is ended and quality of life is significantly improved by taking prescription pain medication as directed and prescribed appropriately by knowledgeable health care providers.

APF was particularly concerned with several biased and unfounded comments in the article, including a quote from a doctor who works at an addiction treatment center who stated: "Opioids are really dangerous... Boomers, of course are entering their 60s, and with age comes all kinds of pain problems. If boomers aren't treated properly, they, too, go overboard." This comment is insulting and insinuates that this generation will become a group of addicts if they are prescribed opioid medications. Unfortunately, the article did not contain any quotes from an expert qualified to speak about addiction and pain.

Lastly, Kelley focused on celebrity deaths linked to prescription pain medication and questions how many more celebrity deaths are "needed" before people pay attention. She failed to mention how many people have died from untreated or undertreated pain and the cost of pain to our society. Every sensationalized celebrity overdose death only makes it more difficult for the more than 76.5 million Americans who have or have had a problem with pain to be believed and treated in a fair, unbiased way.

### **WE NEED YOUR HELP IN STOPPING THIS ONE-SIDED MEDIA COVERAGE**

#### **TAKE ACTION NOW!**

We encourage anyone affected by pain, including people with pain, loved ones, caregivers, and health care providers to join us by submitting a letter to the editor and posting an online comment, insisting that *Newsweek* act responsibly and demanding balanced reporting with accurate information about prescription pain medication.

- Tell *Newsweek* that you are outraged by Kelley's one-sided article.
- Include personal examples about how the stigmas associated with pain have affected you, a family member or one of your patients.
- Give examples of how — when untreated — pain has negatively impacted all aspects of life while living with pain (e.g., difficulties getting out of bed or performing self care, interfering with your work, inability to hold or play with your children or grandchildren).
- State how, when properly treated, your life or a patient's life can return to some sense of normalcy.
- Encourage *Newsweek* to do a follow-up interview with an expert who is qualified to speak about pain and addiction.
- Reiterate that the lives and livelihoods of people lost to pain are worth no less than the celebrities and others who have died after abusing or misusing prescription pain medication. Untreated pain has been shown to shorten the lives of those who suffer — some who no longer consider their lives worth living see suicide as their only option.
- Reinforce that regardless of people who abuse or misuse pain medication, people in pain have a right to timely and effective pain management.

#### **Next Steps:**

1. Read the [full Newsweek article](#).
2. Send your letters and comments directly to *Newsweek* at [letters@newsweek.com](mailto:letters@newsweek.com). Letters should be under

200 words. Include "Raina Kelley article" in your subject line.

3. Post a comment in the comment section immediately following the online article. Follow posting directions on the web page.
4. Share this article with your family members, friends, colleagues, health care providers and encourage them to respond to *Newsweek*. Don't forget your Facebook and Twitter contacts.
5. Please let us know when you have taken action by simply cutting and pasting your message to *Newsweek* into an email message and send to APF at [media@painfoundation.org](mailto:media@painfoundation.org).

To assist you further in your letter, [click here](#) to view our Reporter's Guide that includes information about pain, prescription pain medication and how untreated pain impacts society.

Thank you in advance for your response to *Newsweek*. **We cannot do this alone — by combining our voices we can Conquer Pain Together!**

The American Pain Foundation

*Other ways to get involved in our efforts:*

- Keep up with us on [Facebook](#).
- Follow APF on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/americanpain](http://www.twitter.com/americanpain) for the latest pain news and information and at [www.twitter.com/painadvocacy](http://www.twitter.com/painadvocacy) for information on advocacy, policy and public awareness activities.
- Check out our online [Pain Awareness Month Advocacy Toolkit](#).
- Visit the [Exit Wounds](#) site to learn more about our Military and Veterans living with pain.
- Join [PainAid](#), our online support community.

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