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New Report Highlights Need for Increased and Enhanced Emphasis on Chronic Pain Management

Comprehensive Health Reform Could Help Reduce Existing Deficiencies in Pain Management

WASHINGTON, D.C. – November 4, 2009 – A report released today by a national panel of pain care experts finds that pain treatment needs major reforms to increase access to the right care and improve quality and equitable care for cancer patients, survivors and others who suffer from chronic pain. The Mayday Fund report, *A Call to Revolutionize Chronic Pain Care in America: An Opportunity in Health Care Reform*, makes a number of recommendations including increased investment in pain care research and coordination of efforts at the National Institutes of Health and improved public and practitioner understanding about pain management – provisions that could be well addressed through proposed comprehensive health care reform legislation.

“Patients must have access to the full continuum of care that includes pain and symptom management, care planning and other palliative care that collectively support a good quality of life,” said John R. Seffrin, Ph.D., CEO of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). “Recommendations set forth in the report illustrate the continued importance of focusing the health care reform debate through the eyes of patients who need care the most.”

ACS CAN has long been a driving force behind the National Pain Care Policy Act (NPCPA) (H.R. 756/ S. 660), federal legislation that would improve pain care research, education, training, and access, and also works in partnerships at the state level across the nation to enact balanced laws and policies that promote pain management. The NPCPA passed the full House of Representatives in late March of this year and has also received broad support in the Senate.

The House adopted the National NPCPA in its version of the health reform bill that was unveiled last week, and the Senate HELP Committee’s version of the health care

reform bill includes similar provisions that would increase understanding and awareness about the importance of pain management for cancer patients and survivors.

“Congress has a historic opportunity to enact meaningful change in the way our health system cares for people with cancer and other chronic diseases,” said Rob Youle, Volunteer Chair of ACS CAN's Board of Directors. “We hope that provisions to address the needs of the more than 70 million Americans currently suffering from mismanaged pain will remain in the final legislation.”

The Mayday Fund report was compiled after consulting a number of health care providers, including anesthesiologists, neurologists, primary care doctors, pediatricians, emergency physicians, nurses, psychologists, pharmacists and patient advocates. The full report can be found at <http://acscan.org/mayday>.

ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit <http://www.acscan.org/>.

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