Foreword

Chronic Pain and Its Treatment in an Era of Increased Scrutiny

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Chronic pain is a major health care problem that has significant impact on an individual's quality of life and significant economic impact from both costs of treatment and loss of productivity. In addition, our ability to treat chronic pain has variable effectiveness, and many of the interventions have not been studied using rigorous methods such as randomized controlled trials using validated outcome instruments. There are many vulnerable populations with respect to chronic pain. Veterans are particularly at risk given that many have sustained significant physical injuries and there are overlaying mental health challenges. When patients with chronic pain undergo surgery, management can be very complex, and most physicians outside of those trained in chronic pain management are ill prepared to treat these patients. Finally, we have an epidemic of prescription opioid abuse that is just being recognized, and state and federal agencies and legislatures are just beginning to develop programs to help reduce the problem while trying to determine best interventions.

Drs Fine and Ashburn represent an outstanding team of authors addressing this issue. Perry G. Fine, MD is Professor of Anesthesiology at the University of Utah and is on the faculty of the Pain Research Center and an Attending Physician in the Pain Management Center. He serves on the Board of Directors, is Immediate Past President of the American Academy of Pain Medicine, and represents the Academy on the Steering Committee of the Pain Care Coalition. Michael A. Ashburn, MD, MPH, MBA is Professor of Anesthesiology and Critical Care at the University of Pennsylvania and Director of the Penn Pain Management Center. He was past President of the American Pain Society and a past member of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force. Both have subspecialty certification in pain

medicine and Hospice and Palliative Care. The issue provides a guide to the current state of the art, science, and policy around the complex issues of the treatment of chronic pain.

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