

Anesthetic and Life Support Drugs Advisory Committee

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My name is Patrick H. Kelly, and I truly wish I could be there for your meetings at the University of Maryland, on September 13 & 14, but unfortunately I don't have the financial resources to travel at this time. If circumstances were different I would gladly come to testify at these important hearings.

I feel that it is very important to bring to light the "Pain Crisis" in America. Far too many people are suffering with chronic debilitating pain, and many have taken their own lives rather than live in constant agony. This is very unfortunate since the resources and knowledge are available that could end this crisis.

I came very close to being one of those people, and although it is hard to look back on those more painful times, I would like to share my story, in hopes that anyone listening will reach out for help. Maybe some will see that there is hope after all.

In 1991, I took a fall while working on a construction jobsite in Washington State, and my life changed forever on October, 25th of that year. Over the course of the next several years, I would go through therapy, traction, epidural injections, I would undergo surgery, more therapy, but most of all, I would deal with pain that I never thought was possible. My physicians told me that I would not be able to return to the construction industry as my injuries had caused permanent nerve damage. I was assessed by Washington State Dept. of Labor & Industries with a category III permanent disability of the spine.

I had worked almost 20 years in the commercial glass industry, and in one instant my career was finished. I was devastated! I made one attempt to go back to my career of injury, but it was obvious that this was not an option, so I set my sights on college, and over the next couple of years worked towards my goals, and in 1995 I was offered a full time job at the Dept. of Fish & Wildlife.

Although I had come a long way since my injury, I was left with pain, as a constant reminder, and by 1998 it got to the point that I could not make it through an 8 hour workday, so I knew that something had to be done. I was forced to take some time off on medical leave, and once again my livelihood was in jeopardy.

I started doing some research on my own when I came across the "American Society for Action on Pain" website, and I saw that new methods of "Pain Management" were being used with chronic pain patients. I talked to my physician, and he thought it would be a good idea to try.

By the time I walked into the pain clinic, I had lost my wife, I couldn't work, I had no appetite, I couldn't sleep, I was depressed, I was in constant pain, and I had no quality of life.

I have the greatest respect for these physicians that work in pain management. They are given the task of trying to find solutions for patients who are at the end of their tolerance for pain. They are usually the last stop in a long painful journey, and this is a very fragile place.

My pain management physician assured me that he would do everything in his power to help improve my quality of life, with a regimen of epidural medicine and controlled release drugs.

Since being titrated into my working dose of Oxycontin my dose has remained the same for a couple of years. I feel that these drugs have the capability of changing people lives for the better if used properly, and there is no "High" because the drugs are evenly distributed by timed release.

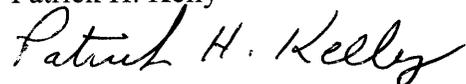
I can truly say that my life has improved a lot since I started into "Pain Management". I have been able to return to work, so I have regained the pride and dignity that I had lost, I sleep better, I am no longer depressed all the time, I have an appetite, and I can truly say that I have quality in my life again, which is, something that I couldn't say before.

I have been a pain patient for about 3 years, and I can truly say that I owe my life, or at least my quality of life to my pain management physician.

It is unfortunate that some people choose to abuse prescription drugs, but that is no reason to make others with legitimate needs suffer.

Thanks for listening,

Patrick H. Kelly



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