

August 16, 2001

Kimberly Topper
Food and Drug Administration, CDER
Advisors and Consultants Staff, HFD-21
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

VIA COURIER

Dear Ms. Topper:

I am writing to you in regards to the hearings the FDA is holding on September 13 and 14 concerning Oxycontin and other opioid drugs. My wife of 24 years, Carla, is suffering chronic pain from a broken sternum of two and a half years ago that hasn't healed (technically a non-union). Since the break occurred, I basically "lost" my wife and my sons "lost" their mother to pain for a year and a half. My wife was given a variety of anti-inflammatory drugs and Ultram, all to no effect, over that period of time. During that time she remained extremely incapacitated due to pain. My wife was nearly bedridden and could not go anywhere without suffering days of intense pain after an outing. She was unable to function in most of the normal capacities of mother and wife. Taking Ultram brought some relief from the pain, but at the cost of her short-term memory, which disappeared to a large extent. Carla would go to the grocery store and when she arrived, she could not remember what she came there for. So she was faced with the dilemma of getting some limited reduction in the pain so she could function but having her short-term memory practically disappear (which can be very frightening).

In our continuing search for help for Carla in controlling her pain, we met with Dr. Howard Heit last fall. Dr. Heit, after careful consultation with us, prescribed Oxycontin for Carla as a method of controlling the pain. Since starting on Oxycontin, Carla has gotten much of her life back and I have gotten my wife back and our sons, their mother. While not pain free, Carla can now function more normally and goes through her day with a clear mind, not dulled or fogged by pain or the effects of Ultram. Since taking Oxycontin, Carla can now complete projects around the house, has begun, again, to pursue her artwork, can now travel without suffering being bedridden with pain for days after a trip, has arranged a home equity loan and begun again the home improvement projects she had planned to do, but could not continue with before due to the pain she suffered. In short, Carla now has her life back. The Oxycontin is not magic. Carla still has a non-union in her sternum to which we are still seeking a solution and she still has pain and has to be careful with her activities, but her quality of life since starting Oxycontin is incomparably better than before. Before Oxycontin, my wife was nearly an invalid, reduced to nearly non-functioning by pain; now she is able to function as a normal person (albeit with some care and some residual chronic pain).

I understand that this drug is being abused, much by non-patients, aided by non-ethical doctors. I urge you in the strongest terms to not remove this drug from the market because of this abuse. We have laws already established to deal with abuse of prescription drugs, especially opioids. You should proceed along the path of vigorous enforcement of existing laws, rather than to deny treatment to thousands of chronic pain patients whose lives would be devastated by the removal of this drug. I can tell you with no uncertainty that my wife does not get "high" from Oxycontin. Carla takes the medication as prescribed and it relieves her pain and allows her to function with a clear mind. Dr. Heit strictly follows the controls required for dispensing Opioids and we follow them scrupulously. Please go after the unscrupulous doctors and "patients" who are creating the problem, not the thousands of people suffering chronic pain, whose lives have been reclaimed by the correct use of Oxycontin and other opioids.

Thank you for your attention. Please enter this letter into your records.

Sincerely yours,



David E. Nees