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August 13, 2001

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

Dear Ms. Topper,

It has come to my attention that there will be a meeting of the Anesthetic and Life Support Drugs Advisory Committee, for September 13 and 14 at the University of Maryland. I am an Otolaryngologist in Savannah, Georgia, and I would like to express my support for the continued availability of slow release opioid analgesics, such as OxyContin. I am aware of the abuse potential of this drug, and of the examples that have been given in the media in recent weeks or months. I am concerned that due to media pressure, the FDA may make a short-sided recommendation to pull this drug from the market. I think this would be a big mistake.

It is important for our patients to have a wide availability of analgesic medications. OxyContin, in particular, has been especially valuable for the chronic pain conditions, particularly in our cancer patients. However, it has also been most effective in other severe pain conditions, such as post-op tonsillectomy patients, where pain fluctuations can be kept to a minimum in the postoperative period. Slow release oral analgesics, as well as the long-acting transderm preparations, such as Duragesic, have been a significant advance in pain control. We must remember that any narcotic has an abuse potential, and these pain medications have been abused by a small percentage of people for many years. We must also remember that the media loves controversy, and they will continue to report on instances of abuse, to keep this subject in the public arena. However, we must also remember that these drugs are used to help millions, and to deny needy patients their potential benefit would be a serious crime indeed.

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I would support efforts to ensure that those who misuse or sell these drugs be prosecuted appropriately. When significant numbers of these drugs fall into the wrong hands, there has to be an associated crime being committed. I would plead with the FDA to recommend appropriate enforcement methods, but to continue to allow these medications to be on the market for patients who need them. Please do not restrict the hands of physicians, which would limit therapeutic choice, and ultimately be harmful for patient care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fred L. Daniel, M.D.".

Fred L. Daniel, M.D.
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FLD/cp