



Posted On: **January 28, 2011** by **Patrick A. Malone**

Panel rejects universal use of pain contracts

A panel of experts set up to probe the effectiveness of opioid treatment agreements has decided not to support the universal utilization of these arrangements, also known as pain agreements or pain contracts.

Pain agreements outline the risks and benefits of opioid therapy, explain what is expected of the patient, educate the patient about how to store the drugs and help the patient distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable drug-taking. Physicians who

Patrick A. Malone
Patrick Malone & Associates, P.C.
1331 H Street N.W.
Suite 902
Washington, DC 20005

pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com
www.patrickmalonelaw.com
202-742-1500
202-742-1515 (fax)

provide pain management to patients with chronic pain may require such agreements to avoid liability issues if patients misuse their medications.

However, critics say the agreements can result in a more adversarial physician-patient relationship (because the physician can “fire” the patient if he or she doesn’t adhere to the terms of the “contract”).

The real problem, many critics maintain, is the lack of pain specialists. As a result, primary care physicians, many of whom lack appropriate training in pain management, may take the path of least resistance and overprescribe pain medications at the request of patients.

The panel of physicians and pain-policy experts, which was convened by the Center for Practical Bioethics, a Kansas City, Mo.-based think-tank, concluded it could not support the universal utilization of pain contracts at this time due to “the lack of data about the benefit of pain agreements/contracts, concerns about increasing disparities and further stigmatization of pain patients, and other possible unintended consequences, coupled with the importance of preserving the integrity of medicine from inappropriate outside influence.”

Source: [American Medical Association News](#)

For more information and analysis of the panel’s conclusions, click [here](#).

Patrick A. Malone
Patrick Malone & Associates, P.C.
1331 H Street N.W.
Suite 902
Washington, DC 20005

pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com
www.patrickmalonelaw.com
202-742-1500
202-742-1515 (fax)

People interested in learning more about our firm's legal services, including *medical malpractice in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia*, may ask questions or send us information about a particular case by phone or email. There is no charge for contacting us regarding your inquiry. A *malpractice attorney* will respond within 24 hours.

All contents copyrighted 2010 *Patrick Malone & Associates* except where copyright held by others. Reproduction in any form prohibited except where expressly granted.

Patrick A. Malone
Patrick Malone & Associates, P.C.
1331 H Street N.W.
Suite 902
Washington, DC 20005

pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com
www.patrickmalonelaw.com
202-742-1500
202-742-1515 (fax)

Copyright 2010 Patrick Malone