

September 27, 2017



Vanila M. Singh, M.D.
Chief Medical Officer
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 715-G
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Dr. Singh,

The Patient Quality of Life Coalition (PQLC) welcomes the opportunity to endorse the nominations of several experts to the Department of Health and Human Service's (DHHS) Pain Management Best Practices Inter-Agency Task Force. The PQLC was established to advance the interests of patients and families facing serious illness. The coalition includes over 40 organizations dedicated to improving quality of care and quality of life for all patients from pediatrics to geriatrics, as well as supporting public policies that improve and expand access to palliative care and appropriate pain management. PQLC members represent patients, health professionals, and health care systems. We are confident that the Task Force will serve as a catalyst to determine current gaps and inconsistencies in pain management best practices among federal agencies, as well as develop strategies that will make a positive impact on patients.

One of the key priorities of the PQLC is to improve patient access to palliative care. Palliative care is specialized medical care for people with serious illnesses. It focuses on providing patients with relief from the symptoms and stress of a serious illness. Palliative care is appropriate at any age and any stage in a serious illness (ideally made available to patients with serious illnesses upon diagnosis)¹ and can be provided along with curative treatment. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family. One of the most debilitating and frequent symptoms palliative care specialists help patients address is pain. Such pain can be associated directly with serious illness, and pain can also be a side effect from treatment. We believe that the palliative care perspective is imperative to include in discussions regarding best practices in pain management.

¹Smith, TJ, Temin S, Alesi ER, Abernathy AP, Balboni TA, Basch EM, Ferrell BR, Loscalzo M, Meier DE, Paice JA, Peppercorn JM, Somerfield M, Stovall E, Von Roenn JH. American Society of Clinical Oncology Provisional Clinical Opinion: The Integration of Palliative Care Into Standard Oncology Care. *J Clinical Oncol* 2012; 30: 880-887.

The PQLC strongly endorses the nominations of:

- **Dr. Bob Bergamini**
- **Dr. Jim Cleary**
- **Dr. Yvette Colon**
- **Dr. Barbara Lockhart**
- **Dr. R. Sean Morrison**
- **Dr. Judith Paice**
- **Dr. Bob Twillman**

These experts and leaders in their fields have been nominated to the Task Force by multiple PQLC member organizations. Experts in the field of palliative care, pain management, and symptom management are a much-needed voice in any discussion of best practices for pain management and prescribing pain medication.

On behalf of the PQLC, we thank you for your consideration of the coalitions endorsed nominees to the Pain Management Task Force. If you have any questions, please contact Keysha Brooks-Coley, Executive Director, Patient Quality of Life Coalition at Keysha.brooks-coley@cancer.org.

Sincerely,

Academy of Integrative Pain Management
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
Association of Oncology Social Work
Association of Pediatric Hematology / Oncology Nurses
Cancer Support Community
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Center to Advance Palliative Care
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Oncology Nursing Society
Pediatric Palliative Care Coalition
Physician Assistants in Hospice and Palliative Medicine
ResolutionCare
Supportive Care Coalition