Opinion

New FDA drug rules benefit patients

BY CUNEYT OZAKTAY

The new rule of Food Drug and Administration on hydrocodone combination painkillers, such as Vicodin, will affect patients and doctors at multiple levels.

The rule is intended to reduce the patient and doctor abuses that produced a pill-mill economy in South Florida, illegal narcotics trafficking

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nationwide and more than 16,000 deaths per year from drug poisoning. Did you know, also, that the U.S. consumes 99 percent of all global hydrocodone supply?

Some may complain that the regulations that took effect in mid-October are overly restrictive. However, we can attest from more than two decades of experience at our interventional pain management practice that the positives clearly outweigh the negatives. Even before the FDA placed limits on how much a doctor can prescribe at one time and that prescriptions be filled every 30 days instead of all at once, we had those practices in effect at Anesthesia Pain Care Consultants. Every day, we see patients with injuries and chronic pain conditions. And every day we see the opportunity for drugs that bring relief to be easily abused.

We believe the new regulations will redirect individuals with real pain to legitimate doctors and push drug dealers further underground.

More important, doctors will spend more time consulting with patients and managing their conditions. People who truly need help will get it, and not just from a bottle of pills. Alternatively, clinically proven advanced pain management regimens that deliver medications in minute doses or those using minimally invasive techniques are available to those with chronic pain conditions.

Will the new rules eliminate drug abuse? Of course not. But they will shift the focus of physicians and patients away from pill popping and doctor shopping to the proper diagnosis and treatment of pain problems.

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