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**WISCONSIN PATIENT ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS ANNOUNCE
WISCONSIN PAIN COALITION TO HELP RAISE AWARENESS OF PAIN ISSUES IN STATE**

Coalition to focus on educating legislators and public about importance of pain care and policy for millions of chronic pain sufferers statewide

MADISON – A group of like-minded health and patient advocacy groups in Wisconsin today announced the creation of the Wisconsin Pain Coalition to raise awareness about chronic pain and encourage policies that lead to better overall care. According to the Institute of Medicine, nearly two million Wisconsin residents suffer from chronic pain. Coalition members include the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), Alzheimer's & Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin, Madison SCI (Spinal Cord Injury Group) - the Wisconsin chapter of the National Spinal Cord Injury Association, Midwest Complex Regional Pain Syndrome Support Group, and the Central Wisconsin Fibromyalgia Support Group.

“For the more than 11,000 people who will be diagnosed with cancer this year in Wisconsin, pain is one of the most feared symptoms for these patients as well as for survivors and their families,” said Allison Miller, Wisconsin government relations director for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). “ACS CAN will continue its ongoing advocacy efforts to promote legislation that addresses pain care management, an issue that is critical to improving the quality of life of cancer patients. Having access to necessary and proven pain treatment without legislative or economic roadblocks is essential to quality care.”

Miller pointed out that Wisconsin has consistently received an A grade in the annual *Achieving Balance in State Pain Policy: A Progress Report Card* prepared by the University of Wisconsin Pain & Policy Group. She said the new coalition will focus on promoting and protecting the state's history of patient-centric pain management.

“As someone who must deal with chronic pain daily and also leads an advocacy group, I can tell you that the Wisconsin Pain Coalition is a great idea for the millions impacted by pain in our state,” said Monica Kamal, director of Madison SCI. “National statistics indicate chronic pain costs our economy more than \$600 billion annually in treatment and lost productivity. That costs us more than heart failure, diabetes and cancer combined, and as a symptom, chronic pain is a very real part of all these conditions and many more. We need to give this issue the attention it deserves.”

Kamal said those who suffer with chronic pain often report immune system suppression, increased risk of anxiety and depression, trouble sleeping and overall reduced mobility.

“It is important to start a renewed discussion about chronic pain in our state and to take time to help educate those around us about why the issue is so important,” said Mia DeFino, a research scientist with the Midwest Complex Regional Pain Syndrome Support group. “Pain management and treatment once thought of as functions of only the medical community are increasingly being influenced by public policies, which can threaten to restrict or keep medications out of the hands of those who need it the most. This is simply not right and we need to make sure chronic pain sufferers in Wisconsin have a voice in any decisions that will impact their quality of life.”

DeFino indicated pain as a symptom is often disregarded. She said the coalition will respect emotional and physiological pain and look for ways to help reduce the toll it takes on people.

“It is important to give chronic pain sufferers a statewide voice to help get them the treatment they truly need,” said DeFino.

In the coming months, the Wisconsin Pain Coalition hopes to establish educational materials and a website to further its message statewide. More information on each of the WPC members can be found on their websites: American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) <http://acscan.org/action/wi>, Alzheimer’s & Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin <http://www.alzwissc.org/>, Madison SCI <http://www.sci-madison.org/>, Midwest Complex Regional Pain Syndrome Support Group <http://www.midwestcrpssupport.org/> and the Central Wisconsin Fibromyalgia Support Group <http://www.fmcpaware.org/support-groups/browse-support-groups>.

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