



HAWAII MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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House Sgt. At Arms
Please deliver 40 copies
to:

HSH/HLT Committee

8:30 am, Friday, 2/7/03

Room 315

February 7, 2003

To: House Health Committee
Rep. Dennis Arakaki, Chair
Rep. Scott Nishimoto, Vice Chair

House Human Services and Housing Committee
Rep. Michael Kahikina, Chair
Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Vice Chair

From: Philip Hellreich, M.D., HMA Legislative Chair
Paula Arcena, HMA Executive Director
Dick Botti, HMA Government Liaison

Re: HB917 Relating to Palliative Care and Pain Management

The Hawaii Medical Association strongly supports HB917.

This bill addresses two important issues:

- Palliative care, which is the active, total care of patients at a time when their disease is no longer responsive to curative treatment and when control of pain, of other symptoms and of social, psychological and spiritual problems is paramount. Palliative care affirms life and regards dying as a natural process; it neither hastens nor postpones death. It offers a support system to help the patient live as actively as possible until death and help the family cope during the patient's illness and in bereavement.
- Pain management. The undertreatment of pain is a serious problem in the United States, including pain among patients with chronic conditions and those who are critically ill or near death. Effective pain management is an integral and important aspect of quality medical care, and pain should be treated aggressively.

As proposed by the bill, an advisory commission would be formed to gather and provide objective and clear information that will help to provide a foundation for improving the delivery of palliative care and pain management to Hawaii's citizens.

Like the American Medical Association, the Hawaii Medical Association believes that it is critical that the medical profession redouble its efforts to ensure that dying patients are provided optimal treatment for their pain and other discomfort. The use of more aggressive comfort care measures, including greater reliance on hospice care, can alleviate the physical and emotional suffering that dying patients experience. In addition, further efforts to educate physicians about advanced pain management techniques, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, are necessary to overcome any shortcomings in this area.

The participation of informed patients and families is also important to effective palliative care and pain management. The work of the commission proposed by this bill will help to educate Hawaii's patients and families about the importance and availability of palliative care and pain management. By approving this bill, the Hawaii Legislature can help to empower patients to embrace solutions to difficult issues that often come at the end-of-one's life.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.