



# Message from the Chair

Florida Board of Medicine

May 2011

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## Winning the Fight Against Prescription Drug Abuse

At the April 28–30, 2011, 99<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Federation of State Medical Boards, the voice of the nation’s 70 state and territorial medical boards dedicated to the protection of the public, one of the most devastating and fastest growing health and safety threats confronting America today was identified.

Overwhelming discussion focused on the enormity of the problem of prescription drug abuse. No single solution to America’s deadly drug problem exists.

Florida has become the nation’s epicenter of the pain pill epidemic, and Broward County “ground zero” for the availability and illegal distribution of prescription pain killers, like oxycodone, which ruins and ravishes the lives of so many.

Governor Rick Scott has taken a vital and aggressive stand against Florida’s criminal pain pill problem. The Governor has created a “Strike Force” that targets unlawful pain clinics, so-called “pill mills”, and the unscrupulous doctors, pharmacists, manufacturers, and wholesalers who illegally dispense and disseminate prescription drugs to addicts and drug dealers.

Cracking down on store front pill mills, and shutting down the pain pill pipeline, the so-called “Oxy Express”, requires bold and swift action. The Governor’s statewide coordinated law enforcement effort, that provides intelligence, analytical, and investigative support, are the essential and necessary tools to combat the public health epidemic of prescription drug abuse and diversion.

In this crucial combat, Governor Scott and Attorney General Pam Bondi have joined forces to advocate for a statewide drug trafficking database, a monitoring program which will serve not only the citizens of Florida, but will set the standard for the nation.

Heavily involved in the fray against the prescription drug abuse epidemic is the Florida Department of Health, with its Boards of Medicine and Osteopathic Medicine, and the State Legislature. Combined, strict rules and stringent disciplinary action will be employed against those who choose the path of societal destruction.

The Federal Government has also entered the war on prescription drugs. In addition to more intense law enforcement and closer monitoring of prescription pain killers, the national plan focuses on the education of prescribing physicians and the public as a key strategic initiative.

In the battle against prescription drug abuse and diversion, the public, physicians, other health care professionals, law enforcement personnel, and policy makers, are all stakeholders, and each plays a critical role. The Florida Board of Medicine will wholeheartedly continue to support our Governor and his Administration in their efforts to make Florida a leader in the fight against this public health crisis. Together, we can, we must, and we will win the fight!

**Michael A. Chizner, M.D.**

*Chairman of the Florida Board of Medicine*