



North American
Neuromodulation
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North American Neuromodulation Society (NANS) Issues Response to the California Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) Order to Discontinue Coverage of Non-Opioid Treatment Options for Chronic Pain

Despite Evidence Supporting Spinal Cord Stimulation, Access to the Alternative Treatment to be Restricted the Same Week the Opioid Epidemic is Declared a Public Health Emergency

Chicago, IL – (November 2, 2017) – This week the California Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) [posted an order](#) adopting regulations to update the evidence-based treatment guidelines of the Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule (MTUS), effective December 1, 2017. Under the updated treatment guidelines for chronic pain, injured workers will no longer have access to neuromodulation, a non-addictive, FDA-approved treatment option, which is covered for patients in 48 other states.

“At a time when the opioid epidemic is devastating California’s communities and has been declared a national public health emergency, the North American Neuromodulation Society (NANS) is deeply disappointed and remains concerned that the order will put patients and physicians in a vulnerable position as it relates to chronic pain management and opioid dependency,” said Ashwini Sharan, M.D., FACS, president of NANS and program director of the Vickie and Jack Farber Institute for Neuroscience at Thomas Jefferson University. “NANS stands united that it is not the time for the DWC to discontinue coverage for therapies that can effectively reduce or eliminate the need for chronic pain sufferers to take opioids.”

Chronic pain, which affects about one in three Americans, has a significant impact on the quality of life, employment and families of those suffering from this debilitating condition. In California, opioid-related poisoning / overdose deaths remain high with 2,024 deaths in 2014, accounting for 45 percent of all overdose deaths in the state.¹

“Access to non-addictive treatment alternatives for pain management is more important than ever, as recent recommendations from the President’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine have urged,” said Joshua Prager, M.D., M.S., director of the Center for the Rehabilitation Pain Syndromes (CRPS) at UCLA Medical Plaza and past president of NANS. “Neuromodulation is a non-addictive, minimally

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invasive, reversible and cost-effective alternative to opioid therapy for chronic pain. The foreclosure of access to this treatment alternative will undoubtedly lead to a larger number of prescriptions, as well as increasing levels of misuse, addiction and overdose.”

NANS urges California physicians, patients and caregivers to contact their state representative to advocate for their care. Contact information for local legislators can be found at findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov.

About Neuromodulation

Neuromodulation involves direct stimulation of the nervous system with electrical signals and is used as a treatment for unmanageable chronic pain. There are a number of forms of neuromodulation, one of which is Spinal Cord stimulation (SCS); in SCS, the nervous tissues on a specific portion of the spinal cord are electrically stimulated to block pain signals to the brain. SCS has been in use for more than 40 years and has helped more than 100,000 patients worldwide who experienced intractable severe pain despite exhausting all other methods of pain treatment, including surgical procedures and the use of powerful analgesics.

About the North American Neuromodulation Society (NANS)

The North American Neuromodulation Society (NANS) is the premier organization representing neuromodulation in the United States and is the largest member of the International Neuromodulation Society. NANS promotes multidisciplinary collaboration among clinicians, scientists, engineers, and others to advance neuromodulation therapies through education, research, innovation and advocacy. Through these efforts NANS seeks to promote and advance the highest quality patient care. <http://www.neuromodulation.org/>

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¹ Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2014