

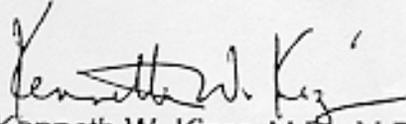
Date: NOV 12 1998

From: Under Secretary for Health (114)

Subj: Pain Management Strategy

To: All Network Directors; Facility Directors; Associate Directors and Chiefs of Staff

1. The attached National Pain Management Strategy outlines a comprehensive, integrated approach to pain management and launches a systematic new initiative for VHA.
2. Pain management has been identified as a significant problem everywhere in American healthcare. Recent studies indicate that 20% to 30% of the population annually suffers from acute and/or chronic pain.
3. The knowledge and techniques to control most pain are known, but they are often not applied effectively. Proactive, aggressive management of both acute and chronic pain is universally recognized as an essential component of healthcare; however, substantial evidence indicates that neither acute nor chronic pain is managed adequately within most U.S. healthcare systems. It is essential that VHA develop a systematic approach to pain management that assures that pain is recognized and treated promptly. No patient in the veterans healthcare system should suffer preventable pain.
4. A national coordinating committee co-chaired by Gerard Ozanne, MD, Anesthesiologist at San Francisco VA Medical Center and Bonnie Ryan, RN, Chief VA Home and Community-Based Care at VA Headquarters will be charged with the coordination and implementation of the VHA National Pain Management Strategy. We will be requesting participation from individuals in the field to serve on the committee and on a variety of work groups.
5. Each Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) is requested to identify an individual as the point of contact (POC) for the National Pain Management Strategy. The VISN POC will be responsible for disseminating information from the committee to appropriate individuals within the VISN, and for communicating VISN issues to the committee. Please fax complete contact information for your designated POC to Bonnie Ryan at 202-273-9131 by December 1.
6. This strategy and the on-going work of the coordinating committee shall be used to guide the development of local policies related to pain management.


Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., M.P.H.

Attachment