

## **Hello, I am Wade Delk, IntNSA Governmental Affairs Director here to talk with you about the issue of Advanced Practice Nurses and buprenorphine prescribing.**

There is a need for an amendment to the Drug Addiction and Treatments Act of 2000, also known as DATA 2000, to allow qualified Advanced Practice Nurse with prescriptive authority in their respective states to prescribe buprenorphine for the treatment of opioid addiction.

We support H.R. 1729, *Opiate Addiction Treatment Act of 2011*, introduced by Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD). This legislation would amend the Controlled Substances Act to authorize qualifying practitioners to dispense certain narcotic drugs in schedule III, IV, and V for maintenance treatment of detoxification treatment.

The legislation is simple. The Controlled Substances Act would be amended by striking “qualified physician” and inserting “qualified practitioner”, and striking in the definitions “means a physician” and instead inserting “means a physician, or a nurse practitioner with a graduate degree”, and finally striking “physician” each place the term appears and inserting “physician or nurse practitioner”. The changes are few but they are important.

Since the DEA letter was sent notifying physicians that they would be inspected by DEA agents, there has been a decrease of 750 physicians qualified to prescribe buprenorphine under DATA 2000.

The total number of qualified physicians is approximately 18,700, down from approximately 20,000 in July 2009. Despite the efforts of the American Society of Addiction Medicine, American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment and others, there has been no growth in the number of providers.

There are over 94,000 Nurse Practitioners authorized to prescribe Schedule III substances such as oxycodone and buprenorphine. However, they are not allowed to prescribe buprenorphine for addiction treatment because DATA 2000 specifies that the practitioner must be a physician. Here is the major argument for change - These Nurse Practitioners can prescribe oxycontin, but if the patient becomes addicted, they cannot prescribe buprenorphine to get them off the opiate.

In a survey of Nurse Practitioners, 33% of the 635 respondents expressed an interest in undergoing DATA 2000 training and qualifying to prescribe buprenorphine for addiction treatment. If 33% of NP's who have existing DEA registrations for Schedule III substances were to undergo DATA 2000-mandated training, these practitioners could qualify to treat up to one million patients by the end of next year.

The 2,200 Nurse Practitioners currently in the Department of Defense could expand treatment by 66,000 service men and women by the end of next year as well.

A key message stated in the Institute of Medicines Report on the “The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health,” is that nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training, and this initiative reflects that.

IntNSA is working to achieve this. But we need your help. Please contact your Congressman and ask them to become a co-sponsor of H.R. 1729, the Opiate Addiction Treatment Act of 2011. If you need help finding out the name of your Congressman , or would like more information please let me know. I can be reached by telephone at 202-253-7862 or by e-mail at [wdelk@goamp.com](mailto:wdelk@goamp.com).

With your help, the authority to prescribe buprenorphine will be given to advanced practice nurses.

Thank you.