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American Society of Addiction Medicine Applauds FDA Recommendation to Reschedule Hydrocodone

CHEVY CHASE, MD, OCTOBER 31, 2013 – The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) applauds the FDA's recommendation to reschedule hydrocodone combination products into a more tightly controlled class of narcotics. ASAM has advocated for the rescheduling of hydrocodone combination products since September 2011, when it sent a letter to the FDA Commissioner in response to an Associated Press news story that called the level of hydrocodone abuse a "national crisis." ASAM has since sent additional letters to the FDA, has testified before the FDA Drug Safety and Risk Management Advisory Committee and has supported U.S. House and Senate legislative language, all calling for the rescheduling of hydrocodone.

"Hydrocodone combination products are potent, effective pain pharmacotherapies but they are also highly addictive," says Dr. Stuart Gitlow, ASAM President. "We are hopeful that tighter restrictions on the prescribing of these drugs sends a message to prescribers and patients alike that hydrocodone is a powerful drug that could have unintended, deadly consequences if misused."

ASAM recognizes the important role that opioid analgesics play in the management of chronic, severe pain. However, most opioid analgesic prescribers have had little to no formal pain management or addiction treatment training. "The vast majority of doctors prescribing hydrocodone are dealing with patients who have significant pain and for whom these drugs provide serious relief," maintains Dr. Brad Hall, an ASAM member practicing in West Virginia. "The problems begin when doctors and patients don't know how or when to taper these medications. A little education about pain management and addiction risk evaluation could go a long way toward stemming the opioid epidemic and overdose rates I see at home." Dr. Hall also testified on behalf of the Society, before the January 2013 meeting of the FDA Drug Safety and Risk Management Advisory Committee.

The American Society of Addiction Medicine is a national medical specialty society of over 3,100 physicians. Its mission is to increase access to and improve the quality of addiction treatment, to educate physicians, and other health care providers and the public, to support research and prevention, to promote the appropriate role of the physician in the care of patients with addictive disorders, and to establish Addiction Medicine as a specialty recognized by professional organizations, governments, physicians, purchasers and consumers of health care services and the general public. ASAM was founded in 1954, and has had a seat in the American Medical Association House of Delegates since 1988.

<http://www.asam.org/docs/default-source/pressreleases/asam-applauds-fda-recommendation-to-reschedule-hydrocodone-2013-10-31.pdf>