



PAIN RELIEF / PREVENTION

California Opioid Bill: Your State Needs it, Too

Editorial Staff | DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE

Ground-breaking legislation passed by the California Assembly (68-0 vote) and now under review by the state Senate requires doctors to inform pain patients about the dangers of opioids and the benefits of conservative care options before prescribing.

AB 888, introduced by acupuncture advocate Assemblymember Evan Low, goes a key step further by requiring doctors to offer patients a referral to an acupuncturist or other nondrug pain management provider (as determined by the doctor) in lieu of opioids; and requires both parties to sign a form acknowledging they have discussed the above.

"[A] prescriber shall discuss all of the following information with the patient, or, if the patient is a minor, the minor, the minor's parent or guardian, or another adult authorized to consent to the minor's medical treatment, before directly dispensing or issuing to a patient the first prescription in a single course of treatment for a controlled substance containing an opioid:



- (1) The risks of addiction and overdose associated with the use of opioids.*
- (2) The increased risk of addiction to an opioid for an individual who is suffering from both mental and substance abuse disorders.*
- (3) The danger of taking an opioid with a benzodiazepine, alcohol, or another central nervous system depressant.*
- (4) The availability of nonpharmacological treatments for pain.*

"Clearly, Assemblymember Low has become a fierce advocate for both patients and the acupuncture profession," said Rona Ma, president of the California Acupuncture and Traditional Medicine Association (CalATMA), in a press release. "If Governor Jerry Brown is the 'Father of California Acupuncture' for legalization [of] acupuncture, then Assemblymember Low is the 'Uncle of California Acupuncture' for his work expanding access to it."

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