

“RELIEVING PAIN IN AMERICA” INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

On June 30, 2011, the Institute of Medicine’s blue ribbon Committee on Advancing Pain Research, Care and Education issued what is unquestionably the most comprehensive report on pain in America ever produced. Its findings and recommendations are dramatic and unequivocal:

- Pain represents a **public health crisis of epidemic proportions**;
- There is a **moral imperative** to address this crisis; and
- Solutions will require a **cultural transformation** in the way pain, particularly chronic pain, is understood, assessed and treated.

The IOM found the basic facts of chronic pain in America to be staggering:

- **116,000,000 adults** are burdened with it—that’s **more than 1 in 3 adults**, and more than are afflicted by heart disease, diabetes and cancer **combined**.
- The prevalence of chronic pain **will only increase** as the population ages and as the effects of obesity manifest themselves in pain-related conditions like diabetes and musculoskeletal pain.
- Chronic pain costs the American economy between **\$ 560-635 billion** in added health care and lost productivity (excluding cost of pain affecting institutionalized individuals, military personnel, and children under age 18).
- Public health care programs absorbed almost **\$100 billion** in pain care costs in 2008.
- Human suffering is often unnecessary—**millions of people get inadequate pain relief** for conditions that could be treated or managed.

The IOM recommends a **comprehensive, population level strategy** to address pain as a complex chronic disease, not just a symptom of other injury and illness, including:

- **Developing a comprehensive plan by HHS** with specific goals, actions, and timeframes by the end of 2012;
- **Reducing barriers** to access—whether legal, regulatory, reimbursement or cultural;
- **Educating the public** on prevention, treatment and self-management;
- **Improving professional education** across the spectrum of disciplines, and throughout the continuum of undergraduate, graduate and continuing health professions training; and
- **Focusing pain research efforts at NIH, and coordinating that research** with other government agencies and the private sector in order to speed the development of **new therapies**, foster **interdisciplinary approaches**, increase **longitudinal research** of people in pain, and **increase the number of pain researchers**.

IOM (Institute of Medicine) 2011. *Relieving Pain in America: A Blueprint for Transforming Prevention, Care, Education and Research*, Washington, DC; The National Academies Press.

Available at <http://iom.edu/Reports/2011/Relieving-Pain-in-America-A-Blueprint-for-Transforming-Prevention-Care-Education-Research.aspx>