

May 11, 2010

Honorable David A. Paterson
Governor
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224-0341

Dear Governor Paterson:

The New York Society of Addiction Medicine requests that you veto any bill that would approve smoked marijuana for medical use. If medical use of smoked marijuana is passed by the Senate and Assembly as part of the budget bill, we ask that you use your line item veto powers to prevent it from becoming law.

Smoked Medical marijuana is controversial. In states such as California where medical marijuana has been legalized, significant problems are emerging. Word of these problems is causing increasing concern, as reflected in recent discussions during the Medical Society of the State of New York's House of Delegates where delegates refused to reaffirm their old position and instead recommended that the council should study the matter further. The New York State Academy of Family Physicians does not have a formal position, but in board discussions the general thinking reflected an opinion that it should be used only with hospice patients if it were to be approved.

The language currently being proposed in the legislature's budget bills indicates that smoking marijuana could be approved for use with any serious condition. NYSAM is concerned that proposed language is vague and includes psychiatric conditions even though research shows that marijuana often exacerbates psychiatric conditions. The bill includes no requirements for physicians to monitor their patients as they would if they prescribed another potentially harmful drug. There is also no requirement that physicians screen patients for substance use disorders including pre-existing disorders involving smoked marijuana or other addictive drugs.

The New York Society of Addiction Medicine is opposed to the use of smoked marijuana for medical reasons. We also believe the matter should be removed from consideration as part of a budget bill so that there could be an opportunity for debate and amendments, which might include more precise language as to when it could be prescribed and specific requirements for physicians to fully evaluate and monitor patients after prescribing it. Without any changes the medical community including much of the medical society does not support the current bill.

Sincerely,

Norman Wetterau, President
New York Society of Addiction Medicine