

March 4, 2010



The Honorable Mark Leno
Chair, Senate Committee on Public Safety
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 4061
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 1414 - SUPPORT

Dear Senator Leno:

On behalf of the California Healthcare Institute (CHI), whose more than 250 members include our state's premier life sciences companies and academic research institutions, I am writing to support AB 1414, a bill that would reclassify apomorphine as a Schedule V drug under the California Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System (CURES.) It is currently classified as a Schedule II drug.

Apomorphine is a chemical that is synthesized from morphine, but shares none of its pharmacological properties. It does not contain the morphine skeleton, and does not bind to opioid receptors like other Schedule II opiate drugs, including morphine, codeine, hydrocodone and oxycodone. As such, apomorphine has few addictive properties and a very low potential for abuse.

Many patients with Parkinson's disease (PD) rely on a product that contains apomorphine called "Apokyn," developed and manufactured by a California biotechnology company. Apokyn provides relief for PD-related "off-episodes." These episodes occur in patients undergoing treatment for PD when they experience short periods of time when their primary PD treatments cease having an impact. Off-episodes are characterized by muscle stiffness, slow movement, difficulty starting movement, and pain. The onset of off-episodes for PD patients can be sudden and unpredictable, and currently, **Apokyn is the only FDA-approved product that provides relief for these PD-related off-episodes.**

Given the clinical value of apomorphine treatment and its low risk for abuse, we strongly encourage the legislature to pass AB 1414 so that apomorphine can be more appropriately categorized under Schedule V of CURES, along with other treatments that have an accepted medical value, present a low potential for abuse, and minimal risk for physical or psychological dependence. This will allow patients to face less scrutiny and frustration when prescribed this vital treatment, and physicians to face less paperwork when administering this product.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandra Pizarro', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sandra Pizarro
Vice President – State Government Affairs

CC: Chair & Members, Senate Public Safety Committee
Senate Republican Caucus