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Dr. Sharon Ostalecki: New Report is Clear- Better Pain Management Could Save Billions

*Michigan-Based Support Organization H.O.P.E. Offers Local Assistance to
Women, Families, Organizations Dealing with Pain*

FARMINGTON HILLS— Dr. Sharon Ostalecki, President of the Michigan-based fibromyalgia education and support group Helping Our Pain and Exhaustion (H.O.P.E.) today responded to an alarming new study conducted by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) that examined the effects of pain as a public health problem. The study found that every year, at least 116 million adult Americans experience preventable chronic pain, a condition that costs the nation between \$560 billion and \$635 billion annually.

“As a fibromyalgia sufferer, I know firsthand the physical, emotional and economic toll chronic pain can take on a person, a family and a community,” said Ostalecki. “The Institute of Medicine’s new study paints a startling and expensive picture of what it costs for states like Michigan and the rest of the nation to ignore pain and continue to do nothing.

“There should be little argument about our next step. Better pain management could save our state and our nation hundreds of billions of dollars but more importantly, it can help give pain sufferers their lives back.”

As a result of her own battles with chronic pain, Ostalecki founded Helping Our Pain and Exhaustion, Inc., a non-profit organization whose mission is to develop and implement programs dedicated to improving the quality of life, for people with fibromyalgia. H.O.P.E. assists fibromyalgia sufferers and their families across the state through education, support groups, buddy training programs, awareness events, fundraising and more.

The IOM study was commissioned by Congress and the Department of Health and Human Services as part of national health care reform legislation in 2010.

As a result of their findings, the IOM called for coordinated, national efforts of public and private organizations to create a cultural transformation in how the nation understands and approaches pain management and prevention. Some of the recommended changes

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can be implemented by the end of 2012 while others should be in place by 2015 and maintained as ongoing efforts.

To reach the vast multitude of people with various types of pain, IOM recommends that the nation adopt a population- level prevention and management strategy. The plan calls for:

- increasing awareness about pain and its health consequences;
- emphasizing the prevention of pain;
- improving pain assessment and management in the delivery of healthcare and financing programs of the federal government;
- using public health communication strategies to inform patients on how to manage their own pain; and
- addressing disparities in the experience of pain among subgroups of Americans.

“The IOM study represents an important step towards better pain management in the United States so we can ensure no one else ever has to deal with chronic pain alone,” Ostalecki continued. “As we move into the future of pain management, fibromyalgia is one of many illnesses that are propelling the world forward into a new era. Outside-the-box research and collaboration efforts like those being discussed today are providing a brighter future for those who once had little or no promise of relief.”

Fibromyalgia is a disease primarily afflicting women in which people experience long-term, body-wide pain and tender points in the joints, muscles, tendons, and other soft tissues. In addition to pain, fatigue and problems with sleep are seen in almost all patients with fibromyalgia. Many complain that they can't get to sleep or stay asleep, and they feel tired when they wake up. The disease has also been linked to headaches, depression, anxiety, and other symptoms.

The author of numerous books, Dr. Ostalecki graduated from Eastern University with a Bachelors' of Science Degree, & a Masters in Physical Science. She holds a Ph.D. in nutrition and specializes in fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue. Her practice is in Novi, Michigan. For the past 10 years Dr. Ostalecki has lectured internationally, and has written and published articles on fibromyalgia.

The IOM report on pain management can be found online at www.iom.edu. More information about fibromyalgia and H.O.P.E. can be found at www.hffcf.org.

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