



ASSOCIATION of PEDIATRIC
HEMATOLOGY/ONCOLOGY NURSES

(In response to March 1, 2010, MSNBC story, *Doctors hastened dying kids' death, say parents. Small study suggests some may be giving fatal morphine doses*)

March 2, 2010

Dear Editor,

The Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses (APHON) is the professional organization dedicated to promoting optimal nursing care for children, adolescents, and young adults with cancer and blood disorders, and their families. We have recognized the need for optimal pain management throughout cancer treatment and including at the end of life. Our organization published a position paper, *Pain Management for the Child with Cancer in End-of-Life Care: APON Position Paper*, which is also available on APHON's website at: <http://www.aphon.org/members/documents/Pain%20Management%20Paper.pdf>.

In our paper, we recognize that "children dying of cancer may require aggressive dosing of analgesics. Medications that do not have a dose maximum should be escalated, sometimes rapidly, to achieve adequate pain control or to maintain pain control when tolerance has occurred." Multiple ethical, religious, and professional organizations support this principle of appropriate pain management at the end of life and support giving a dying person aggressive pain medications for the alleviation of pain even though it may shorten the patient's life. Our goal with pain management at end of life is not to hasten one's death, but to enhance the overall quality of one's life. We want to ensure our patient's live each precious moment to the fullest, interacting with those they love, free of pain and suffering.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah Echtenkamp".

Deborah Echtenkamp, MSN RN CPON®
President