

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 20, 2011

Donna Pickett, RHIA, MPH
Medical Classification Administrator
National Center for Health Statistics, CDC
3311 Toledo Road
Hyattsville, MD 20782


Dear Ms. Pickett:

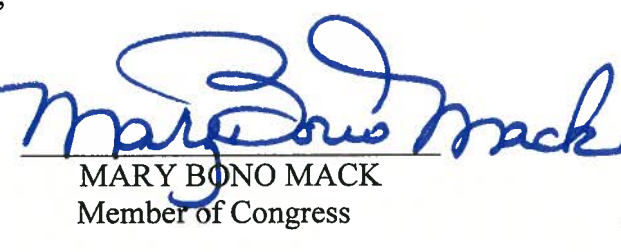
We write to express our support for a proposal recently submitted to the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics by the Center for Lawful Access to Abuse Deterrence (CLAAD) regarding adaptation of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). Both of us have experienced first-hand the devastation and tragedy wrought by the abuse of prescription drugs in our California and Kentucky congressional districts, and as co-founders of the Congressional Caucus on Prescription Drug Abuse, we are alarmed by statistics indicating the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs constitute the fastest growing drug problem in the nation. Together and with other like-minded Members of Congress, we are working towards innovative and effective policy solutions that will reduce the illicit diversion and abuse of these otherwise life-saving drugs. This includes adequate data collection to garner greater information about the factors contributing to overdose deaths.

We understand that the information available on drug-related fatalities is extremely limited, which has, in turn, limited the ability of the medical community to truly understand the underlying causes of this public health threat. Only through enhanced understanding will we be able to produce a comprehensive solution to the tragic loss of life that is spreading across the nation. For this reason, we encourage you to give serious consideration to the proposal put forth by CLAAD regarding ICD coding. Expanding the scope of toxicology categories used to classify and code the cause-of-death data reported by medical examiners and coroners could greatly improve the identification of individual drugs most often associated with overdose fatalities. This will enable researchers to more effectively target their efforts in overdose prevention, work towards reducing the number of preventable deaths and improve patient safety.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. We have attached a copy of CLAAD's submission for your reference, but should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Megan O'Donnell of Congressman Rogers' staff at (202) 225-4601 or Amy Ingham of Congresswoman Bono Mack's staff at (202) 225-5330.

Sincerely,


HAROLD ROGERS
Member of Congress


MARY BONO MACK
Member of Congress