



LMHPCO recognizes the important role Mississippi physicians have in curtailing the opioid addiction in the state and applaud the **Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure's Opioid Taskforce** for its work in bringing about a significant change to current practice. However, terminally ill patients in Mississippi have a unique dependency upon quick access to these same opioid medications in order to manage pain at the end of life, as well as enhance the quality of their end of life care.

Most attending physicians are unfamiliar with the skills required to adequately manage pain at the end of life. Attending physicians regularly rely upon hospice medical directors to assume responsibility for the pain and symptom management and care of their patients enrolled into hospice programs. [This new regulation](#), as proposed by the **Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure** would make it virtually impossible for hospice medical directors in the state to assume care for these patients. Most patients are referred to hospice very late in the progression of their terminal illness.

**In 2015, 25% of all Mississippi Medicare beneficiaries enrolled into hospice programs died within 7 days; half of all Mississippi patients expire within 30 days of enrollment. To require these terminally ill patients to meet with a new physician in literally their last days of life in order to maintain an acceptable comfort level is not only unconscionable but cruel.**

While hospice medical directors are well versed in pain and symptom management at the end of life, most serve as part-time hospice employees, with busy practices within their local community. Practically speaking, this new requirement is unworkable for hospice patients and would therefore result in fewer hospice appropriate patients having access to quality hospice care in the state. Hospice healthcare professionals applaud **Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure's** actions to bring an end to the opioid crisis in Mississippi, **we strongly recommend (as other states have done), that hospice and end of life palliative care providers be granted an exemption from this new requirement.**

We encourage hospice medical directors throughout the state to contact **Rhonda Freeman** with the **Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure** at **601.987.3079** with their comments on this proposed regulation.