

**MARYLAND
PAIN
INITIATIVE**

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Baltimore Sun
Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

The coverage of Keith Mills in recent days brings to the forefront once again the difference between legitimate physical dependence of those patients with significant pain and others who do use opioids to get high and become addicted. Like a diabetic who is physically dependent on insulin to regulate her blood sugar, cancer patients and others with significant persistent pain, can become physically dependent on their medication. Well trained clinicians can decrease dosage gradually, as their pain may also decrease, so that physical symptoms of dependence are managed.

It is essential that patients with significant pain do not lose access to this class of medications in society's efforts to reduce drug abuse. We must remember that dependence and addiction are distinctly different; our zeal to protect society from increasing addiction should not do so at the expense of patients who suffer from great pain and require appropriate medications.

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