

## When Treating Pain Became a Crime

### 3 Letters in response to J. Tierney's Op-Ed, "[Handcuffs & Stethoscopes](#)"

J.D. McNamara – H. Schranz, M.D. – M. Griffin; Letters To Editor, New York Times; 2005-07-26  
[Identifier: <http://www.doctordeluca.com/Library/WOD/WhenTxPainBecomesCrime05.htm>]  
[Related resources: <http://www.doctordeluca.com/Library/LibPages/WODjournalism-lib.htm>]  
[See also: "[Handcuffs & Stethoscopes](#)" by J. Tierney; NYTimes Op-Ed; 2005-07-23]  
[See also: "[Punishing Pain](#)" by J. Tierney; NYTimes Op-Ed; 2005-07-19]  
[See also: "[Why is DEA Hounding this Doctor?](#)" by M. Roosevelt; Time Magazine; 2005-07-17]  
[Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/26/opinion/126tierney.html?>]

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#### To the Editor:

As someone who spent more than half my life as a police officer, I regret that my country, when it comes to drugs, resembles Nazi Germany.

Everyone is a potential enemy. Schoolchildren are trained to turn in their friends and parents, neighbors report on one another, and lawyers, doctors and clergy have become informants, often causing mandatory sentences more representative of a totalitarian government than a democracy. Drug cartels, dealers, corrupt governments, judges, politicians and cops have profited.

It is inevitable, as Mr. Tierney explains, that by trying to control through criminal law which chemicals free citizens put into their bloodstreams, the sacrosanct relationship between doctor and patient is also jeopardized.

**Joseph D. McNamara**

**Stanford, Calif., July 24, 2005**

**The writer, a retired police chief of San Jose, Calif., is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution.**

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#### To the Editor:

"Handcuffs and Stethoscopes" was right on target. About six years ago, the hospitals (and whoever) decided to address the issue of pain. We doctors were encouraged to prescribe more and stronger narcotics to patients in pain, as we had been underdosing them for years.

We were told that the potential for drug abuse was not a legitimate concern, and we were to make good pain relief a priority.

I expressed skepticism that the system would protect us when some expected abuse would occur. Some of my colleagues were more naïve and have since been audited, fined and even jailed in the course of trying to alleviate suffering.

As John Tierney suggests, professionals are nearly defenseless against ambitious prosecutors going for the easy collar.

**Howard Schranz, M.D.**  
**New York, July 24, 2005**

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**To the Editor:**

As a wheelchair-bound sufferer of a degenerative spinal disease who has been prescribed OxyContin, I thank John Tierney for his efforts to inform the public about the issue of pain management in America.

OxyContin eases my pain with a comparatively minimal amount of side effects, permitting me to enjoy whatever activities remain to me with as little interference as possible.

Ignorance of the efficacy of this medication among lay people and its misuse by a very small percentage of people over all is hardly a justification for agencies of the government to prevent doctors from doing their utmost to alleviate suffering.

**Martin Griffin**  
**College Point, Queens July 23, 2005**

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