

MAG encouraging physicians to report DEA number abuse

The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) has discovered that some insurance companies are withholding payment to pharmacists for non-controlled substance prescriptions that do not contain a physician's Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) registration number – even though a physician's DEA permit number is only required when the prescription is for a controlled substance in Georgia.

MAG's Office of the General Counsel has reported that the DEA's Office of Diversion Control says that the practice of using a physician's DEA number as a practitioner identifier conflicts with DEA policy. MAG also says the practice increases the risk for the illegal diversion of controlled substances by unnecessarily disclosing such numbers, and it's inconsistent with Georgia law.

In a communication to MAG, DEA said that “the sole purpose of a DEA registration is to permit the registrant to engage in transactions involving controlled substances to the extent authorized by the laws of the state in which they are licensed.”

DEA has said that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) developed the National Provider Identification (NPI) as an appropriate alternative for identifying health care providers that prescribe non-controlled substances.

MAG is encouraging physicians in the state who encounter this practice to send a letter to Georgia Insurance Commissioner John Oxendine. Go to the General Counsel page on MAG's www.mag.org Web site for a sample letter and additional resources.