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The Death of Michael Jackson and his Pain Attack

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Michael Jackson, the “King of Pop”, is now just another statistic, dead at the age of 50 from inappropriate management of his back pain. We have all witnessed Michael Jackson’s art on the stage before screaming fans for sheer entertainment. This entertainment did come at a price for Michael Jackson. He suffered with chronic low back pain. It has now come out that his pain was managed by a physician(s) not trained in the field of Pain Medicine. Unfortunately for Michael Jackson and his immediate family, he was treated long-term with long-acting narcotics. In this “medical cocktail” the physician provided, Mr. Jackson was given muscle relaxants, Valium-like medications, and more narcotics. All these medications, unfortunately for Mr. Jackson proved to be lethal. It was a shocking finding on his autopsy report that the only “contents in his stomach was present that of pills”.

After reading this news, I and several pain physicians across the country believed, it is a clarion call for all pain physicians to make the general public aware of the need for appropriate pain medicine. We, in the United States, have come to a level of excellence with respect to our health care. No one would accept a patient having a heart attack not being seen by a proper specialist such as a cardiologist for appropriate interventions. We, the Pain Medicine Community, Anesthesiologists, and Physical Medicine Rehabilitation doctors believe the same. If a patient is suffering with a “pain attack,” the patients should be referred to the appropriate pain specialist for care.

The pain specialist will work with the primary care physician in the management of the patient’s pain. The world has lost the King of Pop, but through this tragedy hopefully, a new light will be shed on for patients around the world in the care of their suffering and appropriate management of their pain.

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