Sen. Gillibrand's Anti-Opioid Mentality Will Hurt Women

By Josh Bloom — March 25, 2019

Senator Kristin Gillibrand (D-NY) has officially announced her plans to run for president in 2020. Part of her platform is women's health. Yet recent statements made by the Senator, intentionally or not, contradict her promises to protect women - a theme that is a central issue in her campaign.

“If my colleagues destroy the Affordable Care Act, it will have real, direct, and painful consequences for millions of American women and their families” January 2017

“Between our abysmal maternal mortality rates and reproductive rights currently under threat, we are facing a critical moment for women's health in the United States.” August 6, 2018

"If we take away women’s access to the health care they need, it would be devastating — even life-threatening — for millions of American women.” January 2017

“I still don’t understand how lawmakers in this country continue to think that it’s their job to tell women what to do with their health care.” May 2018

Perhaps the Senator doesn't realize that her recent statement she has made will harm patients, but especially woman patients. Her March 15th Tweet is more than a little disturbing:

“If we want to end the opioid epidemic, we must work to address the root causes of abuse. That’s why @SenCoryGardner and I introduced legislation to limit opioid prescriptions for acute pain to 7 days. Because no one needs a month's
Yet, we see and quotes that reinforce that the Senator is clueless about "the root cause of abuse." She is falling in line with the standard (but demonstrably false) myth that addiction arises from giving opioids to people in pain.

The opioid epidemic in New York State and across the country is a crisis that must be addressed, and one of its most dangerous root causes is over-prescription for short-term, acute pain. Facebook, July, 2018

And even worse:

For example, when someone gets a wisdom tooth out, or breaks their wrist, they don’t need to be sent home from the doctor’s office with 30 Oxycodone pills (1). It’s simply not necessary, but it happens frequently, and it’s how many people become addicted to opioids in the first place.

The irony here is palpable. Gillibrand, like so many other politicians, hopped on the populist anti-opioid bandwagon but fails to realize the irony - that any attempt to over-regulate opioid use will harm women disproportionally. This is because women suffer from autoimmune diseases, some of which can be painfully debilitating, far more often than men. Here is a list of some of the most painful autoimmune disorders and the incidence by gender.

1. Lupus - Of the total number of Lupus cases, the incidence in men ranges from 4-18% [9]. So, roughly, 90% of Lupus cases are women.
2. Rheumatoid arthritis - Women are 50% more likely [10] to suffer rheumatoid arthritis than men.
3. Multiple Sclerosis - Women are 2-3 times more likely [11] than men to suffer from MS.
4. Complex regional pain syndrome - Women are three times more likely [12] than men to suffer from CRPS.

Depending on the condition and its severity some autoimmune diseases can be extremely painful. And what are the most effective drugs for treating severe pain? Opioids, of course.

If Senator Gillibrand is truly interested in the health of women perhaps she should do a little research before shooting her mouth off. Instead, based on a massive outcry by pain patients (2) she shot herself in the foot.

NOTE:

(1) Depending on the dose, 30 oxycodone pills is a week’s supply, possibly less. Outrageous! Imagine giving people the amount of pain medicine they really need.

(2) Once those protests came pouring in Gillibrand was backpedaling faster than a Ferrari in
reverse. Big surprise.