

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 139

By Crowe

A RESOLUTION relative to insurance coverage for the treatment of lymphedema.

WHEREAS, lymphedema is a permanent condition that affects literally millions of Americans; and

WHEREAS, lymphedema is a swelling of a body part caused by the disruption of the lymphatic system; and

WHEREAS, lymphedema commonly results from treatment of cancer, cardiac by-pass procedures, and other surgical and radiotherapeutic procedures and affects arms, legs, torso, breasts, head and neck, and genitals; and

WHEREAS, lymphedema is also a congenital condition appearing at birth, at puberty, or at a later age; and

WHEREAS, the recognized standard of treatment of lymphedema is Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT); and

WHEREAS, CDT comprises four interacting protocols applied in two phases (acute and maintenance): manual lymph drainage (MLD); compression therapy; lymph drainage exercises; and skin care; and

WHEREAS, health care insurers rarely cover these medical protocols for the treatment of lymphedema that have been practiced in Europe for over fifty years and have been recommended in the U.S. since 1998, leaving the majority of patients to suffer their swollen limbs in silence; and

WHEREAS, the under-diagnosing and under-treating of lymphedema patients costs healthcare providers and healthcare insurers untold millions of dollars every year, because the untreated lymphedematous limb is greatly at risk for infection (cellulitis and lymphangitis), which

comes on in the course of a few hours and requires immediate treatment on an emergency basis; and

WHEREAS, it has been demonstrated that treatment of lymphedema greatly reduces and often eliminates the risk of infection; and

WHEREAS, CDT is not a new health care mandate that needs new funding; rather, it is an effective treatment that can utilize in-place medical personnel, equipment, and facilities and has been shown to be at least cost-neutral, and at best can save our healthcare providers and healthcare insurers hundreds of millions of dollars in unnecessary treatment of avoidable infections, avoidable pain, and avoidable disability and deformity; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that this General Assembly hereby strongly urges and encourages each insurance company offering health care policies in Tennessee, each health maintenance organization and managed health care delivery entity operating in Tennessee, and each self-insured group arrangement providing coverage for Tennesseans and Tennessee entities to provide coverage for the treatment of lymphedema, including but not limited to, complete decongestive therapy with related therapist visits and compression garments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Tennessee Association of Health Underwriters.