

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 45

Requesting the Division of Neurological Surgery at the Medical College of Virginia of Virginia Commonwealth University to conduct an epidemiologic survey of the elderly population in Virginia's long-term care facilities to identify the number of patients with suspected Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus (NPH) who could benefit from medical therapy.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 15, 2000

Agreed to by the Senate, March 2, 2000

WHEREAS, life expectancy in the United States has reached a new high of 76.6 years; and
 WHEREAS, 1998 census estimates indicate that 766,976 Virginians are at least 65 years of age; and
 WHEREAS, as people live longer, more senior citizens are subject to a brain disease called Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus (NPH), which results in dementia, incontinence and gait disturbance; and

WHEREAS, the causes and incidence of NPH in the United States are unknown, but senior citizens who become unable to care for themselves and require assistance with activities of daily living from family members or in a nursing facility are at greatest risk; and

WHEREAS, if properly diagnosed, this disease can be treated effectively with surgery, and in many cases, improvement or a complete reversal of symptoms can occur; and

WHEREAS, many relatives of individuals with NPH believe the symptoms are a natural consequence of aging, and therefore, some senior citizens may be admitted to long-term care facilities prematurely at great emotional and financial cost; and

WHEREAS, approximately 66 percent of nursing home beds in Virginia are occupied by Medicaid recipients at an average annual cost of \$30,478 per person; and

WHEREAS, proper identification and treatment of persons with NPH could result in significant quality-of-life gains for individuals and reductions in the costs of long-term care; and

WHEREAS, research is needed to confirm the incidence of NPH among Virginia's elderly citizens and to develop a cost-effective means of identifying those individuals who are most at risk; and

WHEREAS, distribution of informational materials to family members and other caregivers of elderly persons could help with early identification and treatment of the disease; and

WHEREAS, some of the world's leading authorities on the diagnosis and treatment of NPH are physicians and researchers in the Division of Neurological Surgery at the Medical College of Virginia of Virginia Commonwealth University; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Division of Neurological Surgery at the Medical College of Virginia of Virginia Commonwealth University be requested to conduct an epidemiologic survey of the elderly population in Virginia's long-term care facilities to identify the number of patients with suspected Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus (NPH) who could benefit from medical therapy. The study shall include an initial medical chart review at sample sites; and based on the chart review, the researchers shall identify a sample population of elderly patients with suspected NPH and confirm the diagnosis with available medical technology. In addition, the researchers shall develop educational tools to inform the public of the disease so that caregivers of patients with NPH symptoms can seek help. Finally, the researchers shall use their findings to assess the potential impact of an expanded program for early detection, diagnosis and treatment on the elderly citizens of the Commonwealth.

An estimated \$150,000 is allocated for the expenses associated with this study. Such expenses shall be funded by a separate appropriation by the General Assembly.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Division for this study, upon request.

The Division shall present its findings and recommendations to the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees by October 1, 2001. The Division shall submit a report to the Governor and the 2002 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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