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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 78

Offered January 17, 2000

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.

Patrons—Martin; Delegate: Hargrove

Referred to Committee on Rules

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 Senate, the House of Delegates 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 of Neurological Surgery at the Medical College of Virginia of Virginia Commonwealth University for this study, upon request.
The Division of Neurological Surgery at the Medical College of Virginia of Virginia Commonwealth University shall present its findings and recommendations to the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees by October 1, 2001. The Division shall also submit a report to the Governor and the 2002 General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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