

ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED SHB 2293

Certifying hemodialysis technicians.

SPONSORS: Representatives Cody and Van Luven.

BACKGROUND: Hemodialysis technicians are currently exempt from regulation as health care assistants.

Hemodialysis is a form of dialysis that uses an artificial kidney machine to remove fluids and waste products from the bloodstream. The blood must be passed through a dialyzer and returned to the body by means of surgically implanted devices. A hemodialysis technician works under the supervision of a trained dialysis nurse, and are trained on site by the facility as there are no academic institutions in this state that provide a curriculum for hemodialysis patient care technicians.

There are approximately 325 hemodialysis technicians in the state, and approximately 2,700 renal care patients. It is estimated that the number of patients will double in the next few years because people are living longer; people on dialysis live longer; and the number of people with high blood pressure and diabetes are increasing, accounting for some 30 percent of dialysis patients.

A draft report by the Department of Health under the Sunrise Review Act found that improper dialysis techniques present risks of serious harm to patients.

SUMMARY: There is an expression of legislative intent that acknowledges concerns about the quality of care dialysis patients are receiving due to the lack of uniform training standards for hemodialysis technicians working in renal dialysis facilities. There is a legislative finding that the regulation of these technicians will provide increased quality assurance for patients, health providers, third-party payers, and the public.

Hemodialysis technicians are regulated as a category of health care assistants. Renal dialysis facilities are required to certify that their technicians are capable of performing the functions authorized for hemodialysis, and must register them with the Department of Health. The department must establish educational, occupational, and training qualifications of hemodialysis technicians. However, persons trained in federally approved facilities performing in-home dialysis are exempt from certification.

The functions authorized for hemodialysis technicians are expanded to include the process of connecting vascular catheters.

An advisory task force is established to assist the Secretary of Health in developing core competencies and minimum training standards for hemodialysis technicians. The members of the task force include nephrologists, dialysis nurses, patient care hemodialysis technicians, dialysis patients and other persons with recognized expertise.

Effective date: January 1, 2000.

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