

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5448

As Passed Senate, March 3, 2015

Title: An act relating to the treatment of Lyme disease.

Brief Description: Requiring a study of the effects long-term antibiotic therapy has on certain Lyme disease patients.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Senator Hatfield).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health Care: 2/02/15, 2/10/15 [DPS, w/oRec].

Passed Senate: 3/03/15, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5448 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Becker, Chair; Dammeier, Vice Chair; Angel, Bailey, Baumgartner, Brown, Cleveland, Conway, Jayapal, Keiser, Parlette and Rivers.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Frockt, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Evan Klein (786-7483)

Background: Lyme disease is an inflammatory disease caused by bacteria that are transmitted by ticks. Symptoms usually include fatigue, restless sleep, pain, aching joints, speech problems, or decreased short-term memory. Lyme disease is usually treated over two or three weeks. Commonly prescribed medicine includes doxycycline, amoxicillin, and cefuroxime axetil.

Chronic or persistent Lyme disease occurs if a patient who is treated with antibiotic therapy for the disease continues to experience symptoms. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 10–20 percent of patients who are treated with an antibiotic therapy will have persistent or chronic conditions. Treatment of chronic Lyme disease is often focused on reducing pain and discomfort. Pain relievers are often used to treat joint pain, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications and intra-articular steroids are often used to treat joint swelling.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Medical Quality Assurance Commission (MQAC) must do a study of the effects of long-term antibiotic therapy on patients who have been diagnosed with posttreatment Lyme disease syndrome. The study must include a review of the following:

- the antibiotics that are commonly involved in long-term treatment of Lyme disease;
- the side effects associated with long-term antibiotic therapy;
- the effectiveness of long-term antibiotic therapy of controlling symptoms;
- whether allowing the practice of long-term antibiotic therapy would be beneficial to the health and safety of Washington residents; and
- any other aspects deemed important for the health and safety of patients who may receive these treatments.

MQAC must report its findings to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2015.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: There are many misdiagnoses and mistreatments of Lyme disease, especially in Washington State. Lyme disease must be treated for 22 consecutive days and typical antibiotics cannot cure Lyme disease. The symptoms of Lyme disease are preventable if treated properly from the onset. Treatment can help patients return to normal lives. It is difficult to find physicians who treat Lyme disease in Washington. Some military service members who contract the disease go overseas to countries like Germany, where long-term antibiotic treatments are available. Seven other states have authorized the type of long-term treatment in this bill. Contrary to popular belief, ticks in Washington do carry Lyme disease.

OTHER: Evidence-based science has not yet determined the best long-term treatment option for those with chronic Lyme disease. There are also a lot of complications associated with long-term antibiotic treatments. Evidence-based treatments should remain the standard in Washington State. There should be a review of how to improve early diagnosis of Lyme disease in Washington, including more education for providers.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Dan Boeholt, Bill McClelland, Kevin McClelland, Tatsuko Go Hollo, Brianna Cooper, Celena Adler, citizens.

OTHER: Charissa Fotinos, Health Care Authority.

Signed In, Unable to Testify & Submitted Written Testimony: PRO: Faith Ramirez, Seattle WA Lyme Disease Group.