

Sainato



Medical Professionals Legislative Update

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PA adopts voluntary opioid prescription guidelines

Pennsylvania, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Medical Society, has established guidelines for prescribing opioids to help address the state's prescription drug abuse crisis.

The guidelines are voluntary, and are meant to provide guidance to doctors who do not often treat chronic pain.

The guidelines recommend that chronic pain is best treated by using a combination of physical therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, electronic stimulation therapy and careful use of medications as needed.

Pennsylvania's plan to address the growth of Alzheimer's disease



More than 400,000 Pennsylvanians are living with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. In fact, across the country, one in three seniors dies due to complications from Alzheimer's or dementia.

Pennsylvania has a plan in place to address the growth of these diseases.

The Pennsylvania Plan for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders, developed by the Pennsylvania Alzheimer's Disease State Planning Committee, was approved by the governor this year.

The plan's recommendations include:

- Improve awareness, knowledge and sense of urgency about medical, social and financial implications of the disease;
- Identify financial resources to implement the plan through federal, state, foundation, private and other funding sources and partnerships;
- Promote brain health and cognitive fitness;
- Provide care and support ranging from early detection and diagnosis through end-of-life care;
- Enhance support for family and nonprofessional caregivers and those living with ADRD;
- Build and retain a competent, knowledgeable, ethical and caring workforce; and
- Promote and support research to find better and effective cures, treatments and prevention strategies for ADRD.

The plan also stresses the importance of collaboration among caregivers, state officials and legislators, organizations, academic and teaching entities, health care providers, and individuals living with ADRD and their families.

The Pennsylvania Alzheimer's Disease Planning Committee, in conjunction with the Department of Aging, conducted regional public meetings and gathered written comments to obtain advice from organizations, experts and caregivers in developing the plan.

For more information or to view the plan, visit <http://www.aging.state.pa.us>.



New law protects teens from dangers of indoor tanning

Melanoma is the most common form of cancer for people age 25 to 29, and the second-most common type for those age 15 to 29. The rise of this form of skin cancer mirrors an increase in the use of tanning beds by young people over the past decade.

That's why I voted for a recently enacted law that bans people 16 and younger from indoor tanning facilities. The new law allows 17-year-olds to use an indoor tanning facility with parental permission.

In addition, the law requires every tanning facility in Pennsylvania to register with the state, pay an annual fee and post notification that tanning can be carcinogenic. The law also requires inspections and safety standards for all tanning facilities. Facility inspections will begin in May 2016.

The legislation was supported by the Pennsylvania Nurses Association. With this law, Pennsylvania joined 40 other states that regulate indoor tanning.



Approximately 70 percent of tanning salon patrons are girls and women ages 14 to 29, according to the Pennsylvania Academy of Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery.

PA preserves convenient access to diabetic shoes and inserts

A recently enacted state law removes fitters of diabetic shoes and inserts from state licensing requirements.

The law exempts pharmacists, appropriately trained pharmacy personnel or durable medical equipment providers from licensure requirements regarding the fitting and patient management of off-the-shelf therapeutic diabetic shoes and inserts.

This exemption allows pharmacies and durable medical equipment providers to continue to dispense diabetic shoes with manufacturer's training. The exemption applies only to those individuals currently fitting the devices.

Without this legislation, pharmacies and durable medical equipment providers would have not have been allowed to dispense these shoes unless they were certified specifically as licensed orthotic fitters.

Durable medical equipment providers and pharmacies account for nearly 95 percent of sales of these devices. If this issue would not have been addressed, patients in Pennsylvania would have been limited to getting their diabetic shoes from a small number of licensed pedorthists, resulting in restricted access to care.

Marcellus Public Health Protection Act

Legislation has been introduced in the state House that would create the Marcellus Public Health Protection Act. The bill would require the Pennsylvania Health Department to establish a system that would collect, analyze and disseminate health data on unconventional gas operations, perform a standard epidemiological evaluation comparing an area of intense drilling with a control area, and conduct a long-term study on the health impacts of unconventional gas operations.

In addition to the disclosure of intentionally added chemicals, this bill would require drillers to disclose chemicals present in drilling fluids that were not intentionally added or those that occurred incidentally during the course of drilling operations. Disclosure of these fluids is currently not required. The bill would also clarify the physician "gag order" by explicitly stating that physicians may share trade secrets or confidential proprietary information with other health professionals or regulatory agencies for health care purposes.



Task force proposed to study women veterans' health care

House Resolution 923, if approved by the state House, would establish the Pennsylvania Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care.

As of 2013, there were 2.27 million women veterans in the U.S., comprising 10 percent of our veteran population. That number is expected to grow to 18 percent as Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom wind down. In Pennsylvania alone, there are nearly 80,000 women veterans.

The task force would study health issues facing women veterans and make recommendations to the governor and General Assembly by April 30, 2015. The 17-member Task Force would be composed of various individuals including four women veterans who are Pennsylvania residents, representatives from the health care provider community, advocates and various state agency secretaries.



This is one of several bills introduced by the bipartisan and bicameral Women's Health Caucus.

New law establishes incentive program



Act 78, which I supported, creates and establishes the Medical Officer or Health Officer Incentive Program to provide educational stipends to eligible Pennsylvania National Guard and Air National Guard Members.

The law allows an eligible resident physician, physician or physician assistant to receive \$1,000 per month for no more than 48 months of medicine residency or the first 36 accession months of service in the PA Guard. Behavioral health, public health or environmental science officers are eligible to receive \$500 per month for no more than the first 36 accession months of service in the PA Guard. All areas of concentration requested by an officer must be approved by the National Guard Bureau.

In order to qualify, a medical officer or health officer must be in good standing with the PA National Guard; be assigned to an appropriate medical position in the PA National Guard; agree to serve as a medical officer or health officer in the PA National Guard after completion of residency, for one month for each monthly stipend received. This service obligation must be concurrent with any other military service obligation of the officer.

The program will use existing state military educational assistance program funds to encourage medical health officers to continue their service with the Guard. When it comes to employment, these skilled professionals have many options.

As Democratic Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, I am hopeful that this act will help the PA National Guard and PA Air National Guard in their efforts to recruit and retain military medical professionals.

Committee approves legislation to allow facilities to receive prescriptions from VA

The Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, of which I am the Democratic Chairman, recently reported out Senate Bill 1224, which would allow pharmacies within an assisted living residence or personal care home to receive lower cost drugs directly from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Currently, only pharmacies within a long-term care facility are able to receive low-cost medications from the VA drug benefit program.

The VA does not allow long-term care, assisted living residence or personal care home pharmacies to fill prescriptions from their own stock and bill the VA for the patient as pharmacies do with Medicare Part D, Medicaid, etc. However, in 2008, the Long-Term Care Patient Access to Pharmaceuticals Act enabled patients in long-term care facilities to utilize the VA's lower cost drug benefit by allowing medication to be mailed directly to a lockbox where a pharmacist manager is then responsible for ensuring the medication is properly managed and dispersed.

The committee unanimously voted out Senate Bill 1224 in June and it awaits consideration by the full House of Representatives.





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Rep. Chris

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Medical Professionals Legislative Update

MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU!

- Car registrations, special tags, disability placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Birth and death certificates
- Problems with the Department of Public Welfare (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones
- Complaints and problems with insurance companies
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- PACE prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
- Tours of the State Capitol for individuals or groups

State to examine nurse-to-patient ratios

Thanks to a resolution that I supported, the state will examine the issue of professional bedside nurse staffing in hospitals.



House Resolution 920, which was adopted in June, requires the Joint State Government Commission (JSGC) to study:

- ✓ Reports of adverse events in hospitals which may relate to nurse staffing;
- ✓ Demographics and length of stay for nurses;
- ✓ Shift length and overtime requirements; and
- ✓ Staffing levels in a variety of hospitals across the commonwealth.

The commission will issue a report to the House of Representatives, including findings and recommendations for changes in state laws, practices, policies and procedures relating to safe nurse staffing, by June 2015.

