

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5448

As of February 2, 2015

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

Brief Description: Concerning the treatment of Lyme disease.

Sponsors: Senator Hatfield.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health Care: 2/02/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

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.

Summary of Bill: Physicians, osteopathic physicians, advanced registered nurse practitioners, physicians assistants, and osteopathic physician assistants may prescribe, administer, or dispense long-term antibiotic therapy to a patient who has been diagnosed with Lyme disease. The long-term antibiotic therapy must be for a therapeutic purpose that eliminates or controls the patient's infection and symptoms. A provider may not be subject to professional disciplinary action solely based upon the provider prescribing, administering, or dispensing long-term antibiotic therapy to a patient who has been diagnosed with Lyme disease.

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Long-term antibiotic therapy means the administration of oral, intramuscular, or intravenous antibiotics, singly or in combination, for periods of time in excess of four weeks.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: 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.