NEWS FROM THE HOME CARE ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK STATE (HCA)
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NY Legislature Passes Nation’s First Sepsis Education and Support Initiative for Home Care

Bill would support education and widespread use of screening tool to determine sepsis risk

ALBANY – HCA applauds the New York State Legislature for passing the nation’s first sepsis education and support initiative rooted in the home health care setting and practice. It comes at a time when this so-called “silent killer” is raising alarms across the health care continuum, from the CDC to state and local health departments.

Sepsis is a life-threatening condition caused when the body’s immune system wages an over-aggressive response to an infection, often causing injury to the body’s organs. It affects more than a million Americans annually – 15 to 30% of whom will die.

Only a few states have gradually begun standardizing sepsis protocols for hospitals. New York did so through legislation pioneered in 2013, known as “Rory’s Regulations,” named after Rory Staunton, a boy who tragically died of sepsis in 2012.

S.1817/A.3839, which passed both houses of the Legislature in June, would be the first sepsis-related education and support measure for home care, recognizing that – far from only a hospital problem – 80 to 90% of sepsis cases presented in hospitals actually originate in the community setting.

“New York’s health care system has led efforts to take on sepsis on all fronts,” said Senate Health Committee Chairman Gustavo Rivera, sponsor of the bill in the Senate. “Hospitals’ use of efficient protocols to quickly and safely treat patients with sepsis is saving thousands of lives. I am incredibly proud that this year we are setting a new milestone by equipping home care professionals with evidence-based screening instruments that will save more lives and reduce health care costs.”

“As a pharmacist who has worked with home care nursing staff and providers on medication needs, I know how these professionals apply their observation skills to identify risk of infection and related symptoms that could be a danger to patients,” said Assemblymember John McDonald, sponsor of the bill in the Assembly. “Home care nurses apply their skills at the site of major risk for sepsis – the home – and I am proud to sponsor a bill that will do more to deploy this expertise where it is especially needed to save lives.”

“This bill puts New York on the map in creating a comprehensive counterattack on sepsis in the home care setting,” said HCA President Al Cardillo. “We thank Senator Rivera and Assemblymember McDonald for recognizing this need.”
“New York’s home care association has already built a strong base for statewide action, should this bill be signed into law,” Cardillo added. “Since 2017, HCA and partners have tested and trained providers on a sepsis screening tool and algorithm that has been used hundreds of thousands of times by nurses in nearly all counties in New York state. This legislation recognizes the value of this effort, directs training support to it, and would leverage other ways to help home care providers coordinate with other settings for action.”

The HCA tool, algorithm and protocol help nurses identify the immediate need for ER admission when the algorithm flags the risk of severe sepsis – cases where the potential for fatality increases with each passing minute. The algorithm also cues other actions in cases of lower sepsis risk, including follow-up monitoring and patient education. The evidence-based tool was created and supported by a team of award-winning and nationally recognized clinicians and partners. This includes clinical leaders within HCA’s membership, Sepsis Alliance, the state’s Quality Improvement Organization (IPRO) and the Rory Staunton Foundation for Sepsis Prevention, among others. This initiative as a whole – dubbed Stop Sepsis at Home – has also garnered a prestigious “2019 Sepsis Heroes Award” from Sepsis Alliance.

“With this screening program alone, the home care sector has already led the charge in New York State for patient safety, but more can be done to incentivize large-scale integration of screening data and outcomes that would better facilitate care transitions from all angles,” Cardillo added.

The new provisions of S.1817/A.3839 would specifically support action in numerous ways for sepsis prevention, screening, intervention and education centered on home care. This includes clinician training on the sepsis screening tool and integration of screening data and outcomes within electronic health records.

To learn more about HCA’s sepsis screening tool and clinical training, visit www.stopsepsisathomny.org.

HCA is a statewide health organization comprised of nearly 400 member providers and organizations delivering home and community-based care to several hundred thousand New Yorkers annually. HCA works to support providers in the delivery of high quality, cost-effective home and community-based care for the state’s citizens. HCA providers include hospitals, nursing homes, free-standing agencies and health systems which operate Certified Home Health Agencies, Licensed Home Care Services Agencies, Managed Long Term Care Plans, Hospices, Long Term Home Health Care Programs, waiver programs, and an array of allied, supportive services entities.