



American Academy of Neurology

American Academy of Neurology
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March 10, 2011

Dear Connecticut Public Health Committee Members:

The American Academy of Neurology (Academy), which represents more than 22,000 neurologists and neuroscience professionals, encourages you to support Committee Bill No. 5610, which would keep prescribing decisions on the use of anti-epilepsy drugs (AEDs) in the hands of physicians. The Academy supports this bill, and encourages every member of the Public Health Committee to support this as well.

Small variations in concentrations between name-brand drugs and their generic equivalents – and even among different generic drugs within the same class – can cause toxic effects and/or seizures in patients with epilepsy. Therefore, the substitution of AEDs at the point of sale without the consent or knowledge of the physician and patient can have devastating consequences. Breakthrough seizures can result from minor differences in a switched medication, and can lead to loss of driver's license, injury, and even death.

Bill No. 5610 asks that pharmacists notify and receive written consent from the prescribing physician and patient (or patient's representative) when making a substitution of an AED for patients with epilepsy. This is not an issue of generic versus brand-name drugs. The danger of unapproved substitution is equally real for brand to generic, generic to brand, and generic to generic switches. For this reason, the Academy supports legislation to keep patients on the exact drug that has worked to treat their epilepsy symptoms, be that drug generic or name-brand.

Based on the Academy's evidence-based guidelines, which supports complete physician autonomy in determining the appropriate use of anticonvulsants for the patients with epilepsy, our organization issued the attached position statement concerning patient access to AEDs. In it, the Academy urges policymakers to require pharmacists to obtain the informed consent of the prescribing physician before any substitution of these medications takes place.

On behalf of those affected by seizure disorders in your state, we appreciate your giving Bill No. 5610 the opportunity to move forward. Please contact Tim Miller at tmiller@aan.com or (651) 695-2792 with questions.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Griggs, MD, FAAN
President
American Academy of Neurology