SB 857

From: Hoffman, James M.D.
Sent: Friday, February 13, 2015 3:28 PM
To: 'phc.testimony@cga.ct.gov'
Subject: Genetics Licensure

Dear Dear Senator Gerratana, and Rep. Ritter,

I am writing to ask you to support the licensing of genetic counselors in the state of Connecticut. Over one third of genetic counselors in the U.S. are licensed and many other states are working towards this effort.

In my position as Director of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology and Chairman of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Hospital of Central Connecticut, I have worked with genetic counselors. I refer patients to these professional colleagues for family counseling and for molecular genetics consultation. Genetic counselors are professionals whose training includes a Master's degree and mandatory continuing education. Genetic counselors provide an important and needed service. They have expertise in genetics and genetic counseling and function as an essential member of the health care team.

Genetic counselors have the ability to explain, accurately and in easy-to-understand terms, difficult and constantly evolving genetic information to patients; evaluate a complex family history; and, evaluate the need for genetic testing. They provide genetic information in a context of supportive care and sensitivity that is tailored to each patient's/family's particular needs.

They keep up-to-date, through their training and continuing education, with advances in genetic technology, refinements in genetic testing and the implications of testing for the individual and their family members.

With the rapid advances in genetic technology, genetic testing and counseling services are quickly moving to the forefront of biosciences. With this in mind, licensure is needed in order to ensure that the quality of these professionals remains high and that the public is afforded the best level of care.

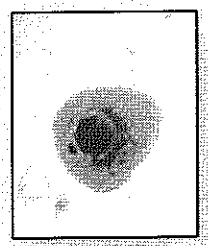
Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

James S Hoffman, MD

What is cytomegalovirus?

CMV, or cytomegalovirus (sī-to-MEG-a-lō-vi-rus), is a common virus that infects people of all ages. Most infections with CMV are "silent," meaning most people who are infected with CMV have no signs or symptoms. However, CMV can cause disease in unborn babies and in people with weakened immune systems. Once CMV is in a person's body, it stays there for life.



CMV under the microscope

How is CMV spread?

- Person-to-person contact (such as kissing, sexual contact, and getting saliva or urine on your hands and then touching your eyes, or the inside of your nose or mouth)
- A pregnant woman can pass the virus to her unborn baby
- Blood transfusions and organ transplantations

CMV is found in body fluids, including urine, saliva (spit), breast milk, blood, tears, semen, and vaginal fluids. A person can become infected with CMV when they come in contact with these body fluids. The chance of getting a CMV infection from casual contact is very small.

Can a pregnant woman pass CMV to her unborn baby?

About one third of women who become infected with CMV for the first time during pregnancy pass the virus to their unborn babies. Women who had CMV before getting pregnant can also pass the virus to their unborn babies, but this is less common. When infections occur in unborn babies, CMV can cause a wide range of disabilities. Each year in the United States, about 1 in 750 children are born with or develop disabilities as a result of CMV infection.

What problems or disabilites does CMV cause in babies?

- Mental disability
- Hearing loss
- Vision loss
- Growth problems
- Lung problems
- Bleeding problems
- Liver problems
- Spleen problems

Symptoms caused by CMV can appear at birth or later in the baby's life. In some infants, hearing or vision loss occurs months or years after birth. Most babies born with CMV never develop symptoms or disabilities.

Can pregnant women become infected with CMV from children who are in day care?

Pregnant women can become infected with CMV through contact with young children, especially children in day care who are 1 to 2½ years of age. CMV infection is very common in day care settings, but CMV does not harm the children themselves. Pregnant mothers who have young children in day care or who work in day care centers can help prevent catching CMV by practicing good hygiene (such as hand washing).

How can you prevent catching CMV during pregnancy?

No actions can eliminate all risks of catching CMV, but there are measures that can reduce the spread of CMV:

- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after contact with saliva or diapers of young children. Wash well for 15 to 20 seconds.
- Do not kiss young children under the age of 6 on the mouth or cheek. Instead, kiss them on the head or give them a big hug.
- Do not share food, drinks, or utensils (spoons or forks) with young children.

If you are pregnant and work in a day care center, reduce your risk of getting CMV by working with children who are older than 2½ years of age, especially if you have never been infected with CMV or are unsure if you have been exposed.