TESTIMONY OF
PATRICK CHARMEL,
PRESIDENT AND CEO, GRIFFIN HOSPITAL
TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Monday, March 13, 2017

Raised Bill 7174, An Act Allowing Certain Hospital Personnel to Administer a Saline Flush to an Intravenous Line.

My name is Patrick Charmel, President and CEO of Griffin Hospital, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Raised Bill 7174, An Act Allowing Certain Hospital Personnel to Administer a Saline Flush to an Intravenous Line.

Raised Bill 7174 would allow certain unlicensed hospital personnel -- in Griffin Hospital's case, Phlebotomists and Multi-Skilled Technicians -- to flush a peripheral IV catheter with normal saline before and after drawing blood.

Griffin was one of the first hospitals in the country to trial a new needleless blood drawing device called PIVO, which has been developed by a startup company called Velano Vascular. Are part of our participation in the clinical trial, Griffin Hospital has provided caregiver and patient feedback from our trial to Velano Vascular that has helped develop the current version of the device, which was recently approved by the FDA and released for sale.

If you've ever been a hospital inpatient or watched someone you love repeatedly endure venipuncture, or needlesticks, to acquire blood as part of their care and treatment, you can surely appreciate how this device improves the patient experience by reducing from dozens to, in most cases, just one needlestick to draw patients’ blood during their inpatient hospital stay. What’s more, widespread use of the device would also eliminate the risk of an inadvertent needle stick and the associated risk blood borne pathogen transmission/infection for caregivers.

This patient-centered technology is literally revolutionizing the way we draw blood needed to diagnose and treat the patients in our care, eliminating unnecessary pain and anxiety and improving patient and caregiver safety. Now we would like to extend use of the PIVO device to all of our patients, but are prohibited from doing so because current regulation dictates that only a nurse can use the device.
This “nurse only” requirement relates to the fact that before and after connecting the PIVO device to a patient’s I.V. catheter, the catheter needs to be “flushed” by injecting a small amount of normal saline using a prefilled syringe designed just for that purpose. In Connecticut, the act of flushing an IV catheter using normal saline, which is saline with no additive, is considered medication administration, so therefore only Registered Nurses and licensed independent professional (Physicians, Physician Assistants, and Advance Practice Nurses) can administer medication.

This is contrary to the FDA pronouncement that a saline flush does not constitute medication administration. Rather, the FDA defines the saline flush as the use of an inert substance to perform a mechanical function, such as the flushing of a catheter. To overcome this barrier to widespread adoption of the PIVO device, the Connecticut Hospital Association in consultation with the Department of Public Health and Griffin Hospital has proposed legislation that would allow trained non-nursing personnel to flush an IV catheter with normal saline.

No one likes to be stuck even once, to have their blood drawn, but in many cases, current healthcare practice requires multiple sticks, over multiple days, to do what in most cases the PIVO device can do with just the initial IV placement. Since virtually all hospital inpatients require an IV, this means no additional venipunctures.

As the flagship hospital of Planetree, the international leader of the patient-centered care movement, Griffin Hospital asks that you join us in this effort to improve the patient experience while simultaneously improving patient care and safety and the safety of our caregivers by supporting Raised Bill 7174. I thank you for your consideration of our position.