

Whitfield Introduces Legislation to Protect Patients During Medical Procedures

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Ed Whitfield, (KY-01), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Energy and Power, today introduced legislation that would protect patients undergoing medical imaging procedures or radiation therapy by setting new education and certification standards for the technical medical professionals performing the imaging. Rep. Whitfield's legislation is co-sponsored by Rep. John Barrow (D-GA-12) and a bipartisan group of 17 members of the House of Representatives.

The bill, known as the Consistency, Accuracy, Responsibility and Excellence (CARE) in Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy Act, would ensure that a patient who undergoes a medical imaging or radiation therapy procedure paid for through Medicare has the services performed by a professional with appropriate education and competency assessment through certification. Further, Rep. Whitfield's bill would ensure that taxpayer dollars are only being spent on those procedures performed by qualified individuals.

According to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, more than 300 million imaging procedures are performed each year. When medical images are taken by personnel without proper training or certification, the resulting poor images can lead to misdiagnosis, additional testing, delays in treatment, and ultimately cost the health care system millions of dollars. Standards are needed to improve the quality of care and increase patient safety.

"By setting minimum education and certification standards for the technical personnel involved in these procedures, Congress can address these concerns and assure patients that imaging and therapy personnel are qualified while also being responsible with taxpayer dollars spent on these procedures," said Whitfield. "I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this legislation that would protect consumers by reducing errors leading to inaccurate diagnoses and treatments, and which in some instances have caused serious harm."

Whitfield's legislation is also supported by medical professional groups, including the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO), whose members perform imaging procedures on patients across the country each day.

"Passage of the CARE Act is crucial to ensure that cancer patients receive the safest, most effective radiation treatment," said Dr. Anthony L. Zietman, chair of the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO), which represents more than 10,000 radiation oncology medical professionals. "We are grateful for Rep. Whitfield's tremendous leadership in introducing this bill to improve patient care and provide patients with peace of mind during their battle with cancer."