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Michigan Residents to Have Better Access to Cancer Clinical Trials

February 6, 2002 — State Senator John J.H. Schwarz, M.D. (R-Battle Creek) today announced that a coalition of insurance companies, insurance purchasers, and patient advocates has successfully negotiated an agreement to cover the routine patient costs associated with cancer clinical trials. Michigan becomes one of only five states to cover these costs. Clinical trials are studies that involve people and are conducted to answer specific questions about new and improved treatments for cancer. While some clinical trials may study new cancer drugs, other studies evaluate how existing cancer treatment drugs are used as well as studying other cancer treatments. A clinical trial is only initiated after exhaustive laboratory studies are completed. Additionally, the clinical trial must be proven to be at least as effective as currently available cancer treatments and the side effects of a new drug or treatment under study cannot outweigh the benefits of using a new treatment. Clinical trials are voluntary and are highly regulated and monitored by groups such as the National Cancer Institute.

"Clinical trials offer a way for cancer patients to receive high quality, ethical medical treatment while furthering the study of treatments for cancer and bettering outcomes for cancer

(More)

patients," said Schwarz. "However, the lack insurance coverage for routine medical expenses associated with clinical trials has been one obstacle to patient participation in clinical trials."

Schwarz continued, "Two years ago, I convened a meeting of the stakeholders: insurance companies, health care providers and purchasers, and health advocacy groups, and charged them with working toward a non-legislative solution to the issue of coverage for patient costs associated with cancer clinical trials. After exhaustive meetings, I am very pleased that a consensus agreement was reached that really makes Michigan cancer patients the winner. I commend all those groups involved for their hard work and dedication to resolving this problem."

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