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House of Representatives

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Eric L. Smith
Representative, 76th District

Chairman Suellentrop and Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the ability for doctors to override insurance protocols in special circumstances.

As a survivor of Stage IV-c Head & Neck cancer in 2011 and the husband of a beautiful, sweet woman who was diagnosed with relapsing/remitting multiple sclerosis in 2013, I can tell you firsthand what it is like to be faced with a diagnosis of an aggressive disease where time is of the essence.

Multiple sclerosis is a disease that is different for everyone in some respects. Because of that fact, not everyone responds in the same fashion to every drug available. It is also a disease that, thank God, is constantly seeing new therapies and drugs introduced to attack the disease. It is a disease that slowly eats away at a person's neuro system by leaving scars on neuro pathways and when it is in the active stage, immediate and appropriate drug intervention is the only hope of stemming permanent damage to that person's quality of life.

My wife has been on 4 different drugs in our journey to battle this disease. She is my high school sweet heart. I have known her since she was 14 years old. I've watched her mature into someone I could never do without. Everyone who meets her says the same thing, "Your wife is so joyful. So sweet." And while I have a skill of challenging those things about her, I can tell you she IS still the sweetest person I have ever met in my life. If an insurance company ever tells us that we have to wait on their bureaucratic machine or that they don't approve of a drug being used that the best MS doctor in Kansas and Missouri, KU Med's Dr. Sharon Lynch, tells us we need to get started on immediately,--if an insurance company tried to get in the way of that, I can't imagine the anger and fear that might cause for us. Yet, it happens to dozens of people every year. We aren't asking for experimental treatments here.

I challenge you to imagine your daughter, or wife, or son, or husband facing a diagnosis of some aggressive disease and how you might consider this bill if your insurance company said you had to wait an unknown period to start treatment. I'm here to say, that is a fear I don't wish on anyone, so I urge your support of this bill to limit the amount of time that an insurance company can delay treatment and provide reasonable explanations for why an expert's orders should not be followed.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and colleagues.

Representative Eric Smith