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AN ACT RELATIVE TO PANS/PANDAS SCREENING IN MEDICAL/CLINICAL SETTINGS



The Importance of Mandating PANS & PANDAS Screenings in Medical Settings

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Introduction

Pediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS) and Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcus (PANDAS) are debilitating conditions that inflict sudden and severe neuropsychiatric symptoms in children. Prompt and accurate diagnosis is crucial for effective treatment and improved patient outcomes. This legislation requires PANS and PANDAS screenings to be mandated in medical settings, including emergency rooms and annual well visits with pediatricians, to ensure early identification and timely intervention. The goal of this legislation is not only to improve pediatric mental health outcomes, but to address the skyrocketing costs to our medical, mental health, behavioral health and educational systems of caring for undiagnosed children.

Significance of PANS and PANDAS in Pediatric Mental Health

PANS and PANDAS are underdiagnosed conditions that profoundly affect children's mental health and cognitive functioning. These disorders are characterized by the abrupt onset of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), tics, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation, often following a bacterial or viral infection. Failing to identify these cases promptly can lead to long-term consequences, loss of educational opportunities, and impaired quality of life.

Challenges in Diagnosis and Current Screening Practices

The diagnosis of PANS and PANDAS can be particularly challenging, as it requires medical professionals to integrate the patient's medical and psychiatric history, physical examination, laboratory tests, and specialized psychiatric assessments. Currently, there is no standardized screening protocol for PANS and PANDAS in emergency rooms or pediatrician practices. Consequently, many cases are misdiagnosed or go unnoticed entirely, leading to delayed or inappropriate treatments. There is an ever increasing volume of research supporting underlying immune dysregulation as a root cause for psychiatric symptoms. It is imperative that this research be translated into clinical practice.

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Benefits of Mandating PANS and PANDAS Screenings in Emergency Rooms

- **Enhanced early identification:** Mandating PANS and PANDAS screenings in emergency rooms ensures that children presenting with psychiatric symptoms are thoroughly assessed for underlying medical causes. This approach allows clinicians to uncover potential infectious triggers and facilitates proper referral to specialists for further evaluation and treatment.
- **Improved patient outcomes:** Early identification enables prompt intervention, leading to improved patient outcomes. Administering appropriate treatments at the earliest stages of PANS and PANDAS can prevent severe psychiatric sequelae and reduce the burden on healthcare resources, mental health, behavioral health and school systems.

Benefits of Mandating PANS and PANDAS Screenings in Pediatrics Well Visits:

- **Evidence Based Healthcare:** Mandating PANS and PANDAS screenings during annual well visits empowers pediatricians to provide comprehensive care encompassing both physical and mental health. This approach supports early detection, timely treatment, and preventable hospitalizations promoting overall well-being for children.
- **Prevention of Misdiagnoses:** Routine screenings decrease the likelihood of misdiagnosing PANS and PANDAS as purely psychiatric conditions, thereby preventing inappropriate treatments that lead to continued physical and mental deterioration and prolonged suffering. Recognizing the autoimmune basis of these disorders can guide appropriate and targeted therapeutic interventions.

Conclusion:

Screening for PANS and PANDAS must be mandated in medical settings, including emergency rooms and annual well visits with pediatricians, to ensure early detection and appropriate treatment. By implementing standardized screening protocols, healthcare providers can identify cases promptly, improve patient outcomes, reduce misdiagnosis, and alleviate the long-term burden of healthcare and education costs associated with untreated PANS and PANDAS. Prioritizing these screenings will safeguard the mental well-being of our children, providing them with the best possible chance for recovery and a healthy future.

In the midst of a pediatric mental health crisis and a medical system focused on value based care and evidence based medicine, it is imperative that children presenting with any psychiatric condition are appropriately screened for underlying medical cause. Action is required to address the ongoing crisis in order to bring quality care to patients where they are seen.