

Laetrile bill offers choice

By Gail Reid

Cancer patients will be free to choose Laetrile for their treatment if a bill introduced by the Health and Welfare Committee is adopted by the Nebraska Legislature.

The Legislature's intent, according to the bill, is to secure a patient's freedom of choice rather than endorsing the effectiveness of Laetrile. Much of the testimony at a Monday hearing supported cancer patients' freedom of choice in their treatment.

The bill, LB778, will legalize the manufacture and sale of Laetrile with prescription by licensed physicians. However, all physicians will be required to inform patients that the Food and Drug Administration has not approved Laetrile, which is derived from apricot pits, as a treatment or cure for cancer. All patients will be required to sign a statement stating that they understand the information about Laetrile.

In addition, no hospital or health care institution will be able to forbid the use of Laetrile when prescribed by a doctor, according to the bill.

Patients and doctors deserve freedom to choose what cancer treatments to use and prescribe, Sen. Richard Maresh of Milligan said. Laetrile should be legalized because it can encourage a patient psychologically toward recovery, he said.

Cancer patients and citizens who testified at the hearing argued for their constitutional freedom of choice. Laetrile should be legalized so patients can choose

what is best for them, said Alfred Schutte of Guide Rock, Neb.

Americans should not let anyone tell them what they may or may not do with their bodies, said Ernest Krebs of San Francisco, a co-discoverer of Laetrile.

More people are dying of cancer at younger ages now than any time in history. There is a "deadly holocaust" stemming from cancer, he said.

Although Laetrile is not a total cure, Delbert Nielson of Lunch, Neb., said he wants the freedom to choose. Nielson's 24-year-old son's only hope to stop a brain tumor from growing back is Laetrile because radiation and chemotherapy have no effect on brain cells, he said.

Choices are not free if they are not informed choices said those opposing the bill. The public is not getting all the information about Laetrile and cannot make informed choices, said pharmacist Rex C. Higley.

Questions about the chemical substance and potency of the drug, and changing scientific theories about Laetrile show a lack of information, said Peter Rheinstein of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Americans' right to make informed choices is destroyed by lack of information, he said.

Dr. Henry Lemon of the University of Nebraska Medical Center said "Laetrile should not be given an unproven benefit of the doubt."

As far as physicians know, it has no effect on cancer, he said.



Ernest Krebs, co-discoverer of Laetrile

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