



SENATE BILL 405: Track Sudden Unexplained Death in Epilepsy

2015-2016 General Assembly

Committee:	Senate Re-ref to Health Care. If fav, re-ref to Judiciary II	Date:	April 27, 2015
Introduced by:	Sen. Gunn	Prepared by:	Amy Jo Johnson Committee Counsel
Analysis of:	First Edition		

SUMMARY: *Senate bill 405 requires the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to train medical examiners how to recognize sudden unexplained death in epilepsy and to investigate whether it is a known or suspected cause of death in each case under its jurisdiction.*

CURRENT LAW:

A medical examiner makes inquiries regarding the cause and manner of death for each body in his or her charge. A medical examiner is required to reduce the findings to writing and make a full report to the Chief Medical Examiner. In doing so, the medical examiners are authorized to inspect and copy medical records of the decedent. Medical examiners are also authorized to inspect all physical evidence and documents which may be relevant to the death. Upon completion of the investigation, the medical examiner is required to complete a death certificate, which includes the cause, means or manner of death, including if such a cause, means, or manner is undeterminable.

BILL ANALYSIS:

Section 1 of Senate bill 405 would add to the powers and duties of the Chief Medical Examiner, enumerated under G.S. 130A-379 the following:

- Establish a sudden unexplained death in epilepsy (SUDEP) awareness training program to educate all medical examiners in this State about SUDEP and how to investigate whether SUDEP is a known or suspected cause of death.

Section 2 of Senate bill 405 would require, for each death under investigation, the Chief Medical Examiner's inquiries regarding cause and manner of death to include an inquiry to determine whether the death was a direct result of a seizure or epilepsy. If the findings of an autopsy are consistent with sudden unexplained death in epilepsy, the Chief Medical Examiner would be required to do all of the following:

- Indicate on the death certificate that SUDEP is the cause or suspected cause of death.
- Request that the decedent's authorized representative submit relevant medical information about the decedent to a SUDEP registry for research purposes.

Request that a person authorized to make an anatomical gift of the decedent's body or body part consider making a gift of the decedent's brain for research or educational purposes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This act becomes effective October 1, 2015.

BACKGROUND: According to the Epilepsy Foundation, SUDEP "is said to occur when a person with epilepsy dies unexpectedly and was previously in their usual state of health. The death is not known to be related to an accident or seizure emergency such as status epilepticus. When an autopsy is done, no



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other of cause of death can be found. Each year, more than 1 out of 1,000 people with epilepsy die from SUDEP." ¹

¹ <http://www.epilepsy.com/sudep-institute>