

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION

No. 141

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

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Sponsored by:

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SYNOPSIS

Designates September of each year as “Chiari Malformation-Syringomyelia Awareness Month.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **A JOINT RESOLUTION** designating September of each year as
2 “Chiari Malformation-Syringomyelia Awareness Month.”
3

4 **WHEREAS**, Syringomyelia (SM) is a generic term referring to a
5 disorder in which a cyst or cavity forms within the spinal cord
6 which can expand and elongate over time, destroying the spinal
7 cord. Generally there are two forms of syringomyelia; the first
8 major form relates to an abnormality of the brain called a chiari
9 malformation (CM), named after the physicians who first
10 characterized it; and

11 **WHEREAS**, CM is a structural defect in the cerebellum, the part of the
12 brain that controls balance. Normally the cerebellum and parts of
13 the brainstem sit in an indented space at the lower rear of the skull,
14 above the foramen magnum which is a funnel-like opening to the
15 spinal canal. When part of the cerebellum is located below the
16 foramen magnum, it is called a CM; and

17 **WHEREAS**, CM may develop when the bony space is smaller than
18 normal, causing the cerebellum and the brainstem to be pushed
19 downward into the foramen magnum and into the upper spinal
20 canal. The resulting pressure on the cerebellum and brainstem may
21 affect functions controlled by these areas and block the flow of
22 cerebrospinal fluid, the clear liquid that surrounds and cushions the
23 brain and spinal cord, to and from the brain; and

24 **WHEREAS**, CM has several different causes. It can be caused by
25 structural defects in the brain and spinal cord that occur during fetal
26 development, or it can be caused later in life if spinal fluid is
27 drained excessively from the lumbar or thoracic areas of the spine
28 either due to injury, exposure to harmful substances, or infection;
29 and

30 **WHEREAS**, Since the advent of magnetic resonance imaging, diagnosis
31 of CM has risen dramatically. It is estimated that approximately
32 one in 1,200 people have CM. The average age of diagnosis is
33 about 24 years of age, and is more common in women. According
34 to the American Syringomyelia Alliance Project, Inc.,
35 approximately 800 people in New Jersey are diagnosed with CM;
36 and

37 **WHEREAS**, While many people with CM experience no symptoms,
38 when symptoms are present, they usually do not appear until
39 adolescence or early adulthood, but can occasionally be seen in
40 young children. The majority of patients complain of severe head
41 and neck pain. Patients may also complain of dizziness, vertigo,
42 disequilibrium, muscle weakness, balance problems, vision
43 impairment, or hearing problems. Often fine motor skills and hand
44 coordination are affected; and

45 **WHEREAS**, Medications may ease certain pain symptoms; however,
46 surgery is the only treatment available to correct functional
47 disturbances or halt the progression of damage to the central

