Colorado Society of Anesthesiologists Statement on HB21-1251

The Colorado Society of Anesthesiologists (CSA) supports the final version of HB21-1251, Concerning the Appropriate Use of Ketamine Upon a Person in a Prehospital Setting, as approved by the Colorado General Assembly and sent to the governor for signature.

This legislation adds additional oversight of the use of ketamine and other incapacitating drugs in the prehospital setting by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and the General Assembly itself. The bill requires careful weight assessment to determine dosing, training of EMS providers in the use of ketamine and advanced airway support, the availability of appropriate equipment for monitoring, ventilatory support, and the treatment of adverse reactions, and the urgent transport of a person receiving these drugs to an emergency care facility for follow-up care.

CSA stands ready to bring the knowledge and experience of Colorado’s anesthesiologists in the use of ketamine and other anesthetic drugs, the monitoring of patients receiving these drugs, and the prevention of complications from drugs of this type to the Colorado EMS system.

CSA awaits the results of the CDPHE review of the ketamine waiver program for excited delirium announced by the department in August 2020. While CDPHE is conducting the current review in secret and without external stakeholder input, we believe that policies must be adopted for specifying when ketamine and other incapacitating drugs can and cannot be used, and for more complete and regular reporting by the EMS agencies themselves on the number of uses of these drugs and any complications that occur. Finally, we urge CDPHE and the governor to include more formal public input into policymaking on the use of ketamine and other incapacitating drugs by EMS personnel.

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