

Drug DES - Information and Assistance

FOR the purpose of identifying persons who have been exposed to the potential hazards and affliction of diethylstilbestrol, commonly referred to as DES; requiring that the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene establish, promote, and maintain a public information campaign on DES; requiring that the Secretary, within certain limits, expand existing cancer screening programs to detect certain malignancies and abnormalities and establish a training program for the purpose of instructing certain persons in the detection, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of DES exposed persons; providing that persons receiving services under this Act may be charged a certain fee; providing for the application of any fees charged; and permitting the Secretary to request and receive certain assistance and data from any governmental body of this State or of any political subdivision.

BY adding to

Article 43 - Health
Section 33A
Annotated Code of Maryland
(1980 Replacement Volume and 1980 Supplement)

Preamble

The effective identification, screening, diagnosis, care, and treatment of persons who have taken diethylstilbestrol, commonly referred to as DES, or who have been exposed to DES prenatally is of paramount public importance.

Between 1940 and 1970, DES, a synthetic estrogen type hormone, was administered extensively to pregnant women threatened with miscarriage. Subsequently, a causal association was found between DES and certain types of cancer and abnormalities in the female offspring of those who took the drug during pregnancy. As a result of these findings, the use of DES during pregnancy has been discontinued. The vast majority of exposed persons are unaware of their exposure and have not been screened adequately for any malignant condition.

This problem in cancer control is likely to grow significantly over the next few years as exposed female offspring reach reproductive age, the time when abnormalities become apparent. The situation is compounded by the relative newness of the studies associating DES with cancer. Thus, many physicians are not yet familiar with screening and treatment techniques or with the implications of the most recent research results.