

TOPIC OF THE DAY: Life-saving equipment

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Defibrillators for health clubs

As American Heart Association volunteers, board members, physicians and concerned New Jersey citizens, we urge support and passage of Senate Bill 2567. If passed, this legislation could save untold numbers of New Jersey lives by requiring all health clubs and fitness centers to have automated external defibrillators (AEDs) on site and staff properly trained to use AEDs.

Health clubs and fitness centers are among the top 10 public places with the highest occurrence of sudden cardiac arrest, which is different from a heart attack.

Sudden cardiac arrest, sometimes referred to as "sudden death," is the No. 1 cause of death in this country. At least 250,000 people die every year from sudden cardiac arrest. Few victims of cardiac arrest survive after 10 minutes. The national survival rate from cardiac arrest is approximately 8 percent. Surviving cardiac arrest is all about time.

The number of Americans who exercise regularly at fitness clubs has increased steadily in recent years, as has their age. It's time for all New Jersey health clubs and fitness centers to be better prepared for cardiac and other medical emergencies. At least seven lives have been saved in New Jersey during the past four years at health clubs and fitness centers equipped with an AED program. However, those health clubs are in the minority in the Garden State.

The cost to purchase a defibrillator, once \$3,500 or more, has now dropped below \$1,500, making AEDs affordable for nearly everyone. A commercial treadmill might cost \$4,500 to \$8,000. Surely the cost of saving a life is worth the investment of an AED.

The goal of the American Heart Association is that for anyone experiencing sudden cardiac arrest, early 9-1-1, early CPR and early defibrillation should occur in the first five minutes before brain damage begins.

Citizens deserve proper safety and protection in their health clubs. We urge swift passage of S-2567.

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