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**RE: CARDIOPULMONARY
RESUSCITATION AND AUTOMATIC
EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING
IN SCHOOLS: "IS ANYONE LEARNING
HOW TO SAVE A LIFE?"**

To the editor: Thank you Hart and colleagues for your perspective on the challenges associated with placing automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in secondary schools.¹ We would like to echo those difficulties and provide some additional insights.

In 2009, we secured funding with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario and Toronto Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to place AEDs in Toronto secondary schools. To qualify for funding, schools needed to have more than 200 students at or above the grade 9 level and not already have an AED on site. Purchasing of the AEDs, placing them in the schools, registering them with local EMS services, and on-site training for staff were all provided at no cost to the schools. Yet despite all

of this, there was still resistance from individual schools and the school boards. In the end, after over a year of deliberation, all schools involved accepted the AEDs.

As part of this initiative, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers, principals, and administrators of these schools to better clarify barriers to AED implementation. Similar to your study, cost was the most commonly cited barrier.

Other identified barriers included lack of administrator awareness of how AEDs save lives, staff apprehension about using it without training, and concern over theft and maintenance.

The implementation of AEDs within secondary schools must overcome a number of barriers beyond cost. Some of these may be addressed by provincial legislation mandating AED placement and removing liability risk. Other barriers can be overcome by increasing staff knowledge

on the benefits of AEDs, ease of use without training, and minimal maintenance requirements. Targeted intercessions are urgently required such that no child or adult attending a school is denied access to an AED while waiting for EMS to arrive.

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