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**Coalition of Hearing Specialists
Committed to Advancing the Highest Standards
in Quality Hearing Health Care**

TRENTON, NJ - The NJ Association of Hearing Health Professionals (NJAHHP), NJ Academy of Audiology (NJAA), and NJ Speech Language Hearing Association (NJSHA) are taking a strong stance against direct Internet sales of hearing aids to New Jersey consumers in the interest of protecting the quality, safety and satisfaction in hearing healthcare that patients deserve and expect. The coalition of hearing health specialists is particularly concerned about the recent announcement from a major health insurance company that it will be selling hearing aids to consumers online without the consultation of licensed hearing professionals.

Not only is it questionable for an insurance company to be profiting from the sale of medical devices to its members, with no professional guidance, assessment or examination by hearing aid specialists, consumers run the risk of purchasing ineffective or ill-fitting devices that can further damage their hearing. Equally concerning is these patients will not be monitored for serious hearing problems or undergo important follow-up care that is central to good hearing health.

“Audiologists and hearing instrument specialists are trained and licensed to know what to look for to ensure patient safety and appropriate care in hearing health,” says David Weesner, Au.D., president of NJAHHP. “Their personalized attention and clinical knowledge cannot be replaced by an automated and uncalibrated online hearing test that will no doubt yield unreliable results.”

The direct sale of hearing aids over the Internet by insurance companies turns patient care on its head. Rather than performing hearing tests in a sound controlled environment, patients will undergo a pre-set test where they listen to random tones through the computer. With no guidance from hearing professionals or controls to ensure accurate readings, consumers will be left to analyze their own test results and determine which aid to select. Then, when they receive their devices through the mail, they will have to program them on their own, which can be a complicated process that can further damage hearing if the output is set too great.

“Hearing loss is a personal condition that deserves personalized attention and care from professionals that have the training and experience to assure that results meet patient expectation,” said Robert M. DiSogra, Au.D., FAAA, President of NJAA. “Hearing aids without consultation and rehabilitation from hearing specialists fall short of meaningful treatment for the hearing impaired.”

Patients that purchase hearing aids from insurance companies will miss out on receiving a thorough otoscopic ear examination by credentialed professionals that have the expertise to evaluate the results and recommend the most appropriate path for care. These specialists have the clinical knowledge to determine type and degree of hearing loss and understand how historical indicators come into play such a family history, medications, noise induced hearing loss, and head injuries in advising next steps in treatment.

“Experience tells us that patient satisfaction with hearing aid devices is directly related to comprehensive care from hearing specialists,” Robert W. Woods, Ph.D., FAAA, Chairperson of the Audiology Committee of the NJSHA. “An insurance company getting involved in the business of selling hearing aids to patients eliminates this vital face-to-face consultation, hampering the benefit, performance and value they will receive from their hearing instruments. Direct hearing aid sales is a delivery system not recommended by state and national professional associations, as well as and such respected national consumer organizations as the Better Hearing Institute,” Dr. Woods concluded.

About New Jersey Association of Hearing Health Professionals

The New Jersey Association of Hearing Health Professionals is the oldest organization representing hearing care specialists in New Jersey. Organized in 1960, NJAHHP exemplifies honesty, fair practice and professionalism in fitting hearing instruments. We provide for the educational and advisory needs of our professionals to better serve the hearing impaired and their families. For more information, visit www.njahhp.com

About New Jersey Academy of Audiology

The New Jersey Academy of Audiology was founded in 1992 as a professional organization for all NJ licensed audiologists. Audiologists are licensed to identify hearing and balance disorders in children and adults and provide rehabilitation (including hearing aids) to manage these problems. The majority of NJAA members have a doctoral degree in audiology. The goals of the Academy are continuing education, advocacy and consumer protection. The NJAA is an affiliate of the American Academy of Audiology. For more information, visit: www.njaudiology.org

About New Jersey Speech Language Hearing Association

The mission of the New Jersey Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NJSHA) is to serve audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and speech, language or hearing scientists by providing resources, information, programs, and services that meet members’ needs; promoting public awareness; and advocating for professional standards, legislation, and regulation necessary to provide the highest quality of care for the individuals they serve. For more information, visit www.njsha.org

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