

# **RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF HEARING AID DEALERS AND FITTERS**

## **MINUTES OF MEETING**

**July 13, 2012**

**The Open Session of the Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Fitters was called to order at 8:55 a.m. on the above date in Room 104, Cannon Building, Department of Health, Three Capitol Hill, Providence, Rhode Island, pursuant to the applicable provisions of the Open Meeting Law, so called, and other applicable provisions of the General Laws of the State of Rhode Island, as amended. A quorum was established.**

**Board members in attendance: Board members not in attendance:**

**James Healey**

**Cathy Atkinson**

**Edward Melusky Staff members in attendance:**

**Michael Lancia J. Michel Martineau**

**Thomas Corrigan, Esq.**

**Others in attendance:**

**Tammi Burnham, Allied Court Reporters**

**The Minutes of the open session held on May 4, 2012 were presented.**

**Dr. James Healey notes an error and makes a motion to correct by amending, seconded by Cathy Atkinson, it passed unanimously.**

**Edward Melusky makes a motion to accept the minutes as amended, seconded by Cathy Atkinson, it was unanimously voted to accept the minutes.**

**Members discuss the current practice of United HealthCare as it pertains to hearing aids for policy holders over 65 years (Medicare). Dr. Healey indicates the model UHC has been using is evolving, members state UHC may be changing their model based on negative feedback from policy holders and states. Michael Lancia suggests that now hiHealth performs the hearing test in RI, previously it was uncertain where or how the hearing test was performed.**

**Michael Lancia indicates he has eight patients that initially went to hiHealth but returned to his practice because these seniors were not comfortable dealing with the hiHealth process, which includes computers. Mr. Lancia indicates UHC info may be interpreted by policy holders to mean they must go to hiHealth. It is known that for the patient to get the \$500 reimbursement, they must obtain their hearing aid through hiHealth.**

**Atty. Corrigan asks if UHC changed their contract as it pertains to coverage for hearing aids, a Member indicates they understand there have been changes on the recent UHC contract. Atty. Corrigan notes a new contract is the appropriate time to institute changes, he also note that UHC could say they no longer will cover the cost of any hearing aid and that should be understood.**

**Michael Lancia notes the importance of a professional fitting, indicating that without adequate precaution a senior could be sent a hearing aid that provides for greater than 136 decibels, this may cause harm, Cathy Atkinson notes that harm may occur when it exceeds 85 decibels.**

**Atty. Corrigan states it would be important to understand the specific process UHC is using and to accomplish this we should work to identify policy holders who have completed the process with hiHealth. Board members direct the administrator to communicate with the Speech / Audiology board administrator to seek their input and involvement, specifically ask if they have seen a patient who completed the process with hiHealth. Also, board members indicate they will work to communicate with other professionals to identify people who have completed the process with hiHealth.**

**UHC has failed to respond to the letter sent by the administrator. The administrator notes we cannot assume UHC is doing something wrong, but their lack of responding to provide clarification leaves many unanswered questions, including but not limited to: a) Are UNC patients denied a \$500 reimbursement if they do not purchase through hiHealth, b) Where and how is the hearing test being conducted, in what state, by what trained personnel, who is**

**interpreting the results of the test, c) Is the Purchase and Sale Agreement drafted in the correct font size, d) Does hiHealth fit the hearing aid to the person or is the hearing aid delivered to the home without a fitting, e) Does hiHealth charge for the computer test, f) Is hiHealth programming the hearing aid out of state and then shipping to patient in RI.**

### **Adjournment**

**On a motion by Dr. James Healey, seconded by Cathy Atkinson, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 am.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**J. Michel Martineau**

**Board Administrator**