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Hear, Here: The Physician's Newsletter

SUMMER 2008

Slow Economic Times affecting Industry

Coastal Audiology has a plan that helps patients during these tough economic times

It's no secret that hearing aids are expensive. Among other things, the cost of hearing aids is cited as one of the top reasons patients choose to not be fit with hearing aids. Many people are surprised to learn that most personal insurance plans, Medicare, and Medicare supplements do not cover the cost of hearing aids. Additionally, if the words "hearing aid" are even mentioned to Medicare or Medicare supplements, they will deny claims submitted for comprehensive hearing tests. As a result, many people choose to "just live" with their hearing loss. Slowly, they withdraw socially, quitting the activities they once enjoyed such as going to church, playing BINGO, lecturing, playing golf, etc., all because of their hearing

loss. Most offices, including Coastal Audiology, offer financing, but many patients can't (or won't) finance.

Coastal Audiology is pleased to be the first local provider to offer an "unbundled" option in addition to our normal purchase plan for patients seeking hearing aids. This unbundled option, called "Pay-as-you-Go", allows patients to pay significantly lower prices for just their hearing aids, the initial fitting, and a two-week post-fitting check. Beyond that, patients can pay a nominal fee to have their hearing aids cleaned, adjusted, and reprogrammed, as well as purchasing supplies, like batteries. The manufacturer's standard repair and loss & damage warranty is also included, which is typically one year.

As with many items offered 'a la carte', a patient may end up paying a little more over time, but this allows them to be fit with the same high-quality amplification without having to pay for all service and supplies they may or may not use up front.

Our regular purchase plan, called Protection Plus+, offers patients 3 years of service, a 3-year supply of batteries, a 3-year repair warranty and a 3-year loss/damage warranty. This is the most comprehensive warranty in the industry and we are pleased to offer this to our patients.

As you can see, Coastal Audiology has a plan that is right for any hearing loss and budget. We would appreciate your hearing aid referrals!

Coastal Audiology now offering Video Otoscopy

Proving to reluctant patients that "it's not 'just wax'."

Coastal Audiology is pleased to announce that we now offer Video Otoscopic Examinations. Our new system allows us to show patients their external auditory canal(s). This can be important to show patients that their hearing loss isn't 'just

wax'. It has also been helpful in discouraging patients who use cotton swabs (Q-tips), resulting in impacted cerumen.

We have the ability to take still photographs, print them, as well as taking short video clips. This new tool has been a wel-

Picture of cerumen lining



Did you know Coastal Audiology makes custom swim plugs?

Did you know Coastal Audiology can make custom swim plugs? We have several different varieties, some even available the same day, in about 5 minutes!

Custom earplugs are the preferred choice for many physicians and patients alike, as they provide a better fit over 'putty-type' earplugs.

These plugs are great for children who suffer from chronic

'swimmer's ear', as well as children who have PE tubes. People who swim frequently also prefer custom-made plugs, as they are more comfortable for long-term use.



If you have a patient in need of protection from water getting into their ears, please recommend custom-made

plugs. They range in price from \$45-\$87/ pair depending on whether they are made in the office or sent out to be made at a lab. Lab manufactured plugs are available in a variety of fashion colors including glitter, swirl, camouflage, and solids. The plugs we make in the office are only available in red and blue, but are a great choice, especially when time is a factor.

All patients requesting Audiology services who wish to have their insurance billed must have, at minimum, an order on file from their physician.

Referrals for Hearing Tests, Hearing Aids, etc.

Please share this information with your referral coordinators

We have enclosed a copy of our referral form with this edition of our newsletter. In the past, there has been confusion about when a patient needs a referral. To make it easier, here are some helpful guidelines for your referral coordinators to go by:

Every patient, regardless of the type of insurance they have (PPO, POS, HMO) must have an "ORDER" from their physician (usually their primary care physician) in order for insurance to cover the cost of their comprehensive hearing

test. This 'order' can be as simple as a handwritten note on a prescription pad or as elaborate as an actual referral generated from the insurance company. Either way, the patient's physician must be notified that the patient is requesting a hearing test.

Currently, Audiologists have not yet achieved Independent Practitioner Status, so therefore, there must be some degree of communication between the Audiologist and the patient's physician in or-

der for their insurance to pay for their test, provided they have this coverage.

Some insurance plans, such as HMOs, require the patient to actually have a 'referral' to the Audiologist (or any other specialist for that matter.) All other insurance plans typically simply request that some sort of documentation be maintained. We sincerely appreciate your referrals. Please let us know what we can do to improve our service to you and your patients.

ATTENTION: HEATHER WINGATE

FAX NUMBER: (912) 748-9495

NUMBER OF PAGES: _____

***Please note: This form is required for all patients to be seen by our Audiologist for**

ALL AUDIOLOGIC TESTING AND PROCEDURES

Date: _____ Completed by: _____

Patient Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Insurance Provider: _____ Phone Number: _____

Group Number: _____ Policy Number: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____ Phone: _____

Diagnosis Description and Code: _____

Referred To: **Coastal Audiology**
Dawn Hostetler-MacMillan, M.S., CCC-A
138 Canal Street, Suite 108
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(912) 748-9494 Phone
(912) 748-9495 Fax

UPIN: Q37332
REF: 700682894
NPI: 1710988472
Tax ID#: 20-1328979

To be completed by referring physician's office

Physician Referring: _____ Phone: _____

Referral Number: _____ Referral Date: _____

Referral Expiration: _____



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Thank you for your referrals.

What can you find at www.coastalaudiology.com?



Though our website is primarily patient-focused, we do have a page just for you. This page has a variety of information, from forms to the most recent edition of our physician's newsletter *Hear, Here*.

We will be adding valuable tools to assist you and your patients and invite you to check back often.

In addition to our "For Physicians" page, we have directions to our office, we have an

Appointment Request page for patients, our Quarterly patient-focused newsletter, *'Hears' to your Ears*, printable copies of our intake paperwork, and much more.

Of the more utilized pages of our site is the "Hearing Aids" page. Current patients tell us they check this page frequently to see what new has been launched in the world of hearing aids, even

though many have only recently been fit with new hearing aids! This page is constantly being updated, so if you have patients who are candidates for hearing aids, encourage them to visit our site and get a preview of what is out there. Obviously not all patients are candidates for all products, but that's why a face-to-face consultation is best. Thanks for visiting!