

## ***hi HealthInnovations Program Overview***

*hi HealthInnovations* is addressing a serious and growing consumer health need by making it easier to screen for hearing loss and more affordable to improve hearing health. By increasing access to hearing testing and high-tech, affordable hearing aids with robust customer support, our goal is to improve the health and quality of life of the people we serve.

*hi HealthInnovations'* approach is intended to increase access to hearing aids and the hearing health system for people who are not accessing the system today. This is important because:

- Hearing loss affects 48 million Americans and is the 3rd most common chronic condition among older adults.
- Left untreated, it can contribute to social isolation, depression, and dementia. Social isolation is a significant risk factor for age-related morbidity and mortality.
- Screening for hearing loss is not routine. Only 14 percent of physicians screen for hearing loss during a physical.
- While 90 percent of people with hearing loss could benefit from hearing devices, only 15 - 20 percent currently uses them, largely due to high cost.
- Early treatment may reduce the impact of hearing loss on quality of life and may have better eventual outcomes with hearing devices. Treating hearing loss early may also help preserve brain function.

To facilitate earlier detection and treatment of hearing loss, *hi HealthInnovations* provides individuals with additional testing and service options that support their style of health management. *hi HealthInnovations* has developed an at-home hearing test and a clinical hearing test for the primary care setting.

- The at-home hearing test at [hihealthinnovations.com](http://hihealthinnovations.com) is a user-friendly test that can be taken using standard computer equipment and earphones. The at-home test is one component of the overall hi HealthInnovations hearing program and is offered free of charge for anyone who wishes to take a hearing test. It has been scientifically tested and shown to be effective for estimating hearing loss. The average gain prescribed by the at-home test is within 1 dB of the NAL-NL2 gain prescribed based on an audiogram generated in a traditional setting. Scientific validation of the online hearing test is published in the January 2012 issue of Hearing Review, available here: [http://www.hearingreview.com/issues/articles/2012-01\\_02.asp](http://www.hearingreview.com/issues/articles/2012-01_02.asp) The online hearing test is designed to refer individuals to medical professionals upon detection of asymmetrical or severe hearing loss, or if patient has sudden or unilateral hearing loss, injury of the ear, active drainage from the ear, dizziness, or pain in the ear. The at-home hearing test recommends that users with these conditions consult with medical professionals.
- *hi HealthInnovations* is engaging primary care providers in the screening of hearing loss and importance of hearing health to overall health and well-being. As a first step, *hi HealthInnovations* will be making available the clinical hearing test to UnitedHealthcare's Medicare contracted primary care providers as an additional option for hearing testing. The clinical hearing test is a pure tone audiometric test that measures hearing sensitivity. The results are recorded in an audiogram and are also accompanied by a clear explanation of the patient's hearing level. The test also detects types of hearing loss (e.g., asymmetrical, severe, or low frequency) that may require further medical evaluation or referral to a hearing professional.



*hi HealthInnovations* encourages individuals to engage with their health providers, and we are interested in partnering with hearing professionals to bring affordable, quality care for people with hearing impairment, both in testing and devices. With greater awareness and access to testing, more people will realize that they have hearing loss and seek treatment. As more people enter the hearing health system, the need for access to hearing professionals will increase. As we work with more people through *hi HealthInnovations*, we expect to make an increasing stream of referrals to professionals. These referrals will be of people who are already aware that they need specialized treatment from professionals as a result of starting in our program.

The cost of high tech, custom-programmed hearing aids can be prohibitively high for many individuals. By leveraging the scale of UnitedHealth Group and bypassing supply chain intermediaries, *hi HealthInnovations* streamlines the process and passes the savings to the consumer. Moreover, in 2012 many UnitedHealthcare Medicare Plans have added a comprehensive hearing aid benefit that will provide many beneficiaries access to hearing aids for the first time. This is a win-win for patients and professionals as insurance coverage of hearing aids can facilitate adoption. In countries where there is coverage of hearing aids, hearing aid adoption is more than double the rate of U.S. adoption.

*hi HealthInnovations* offers extensive support to consumers who purchase its hearing aids. This includes captioned training videos regarding how to use, clean, and maintain hearing aids. Toll-free TTY telephone support is available 12 hours per day Monday through Friday, with hearing professionals available to consult with customers both over the phone and in person. *hi HealthInnovations* also provides free programming adjustments. Finally, if they are not



satisfied, consumers may return the hearing aids in good condition to *hi HealthInnovations* for any reason within 45 business days after they receive the hearing aids and receive a full refund.

In addition to its hearing health team, *hi HealthInnovations* will also facilitate access to hearing professionals through referrals. Professional services will be paid separately from the hearing devices. The benefit of accepting referrals from *hi HealthInnovations* is that referrals are provided at no cost to professionals. Moreover, most professional services fees are paid directly by the customer at the time of the service, so it is a more simplified and expedient payment process. Third, consumers receive information about the list of key services and prices prior to their appointment, so they have clear expectations. In addition to the benefits of this model of care, the need for a practice to spend time, energy and money on marketing and administration is reduced. If you are interested in accepting referrals from *hi HealthInnovations*, please send an email to [hi@hihealthinnovations.com](mailto:hi@hihealthinnovations.com).