

10/18/00

Honorable Donna Shalala
Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., S. W.
Room 615F
Washington, D. C.

Dear Secretary Shalala:

I am writing to you concerning the possible revision of the current FDA regulation covering hearing aid dispensing.

The current FDA regulation requiring medical clearance by a medical doctor, preferably an Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist, is the best way to protect and to serve the public.

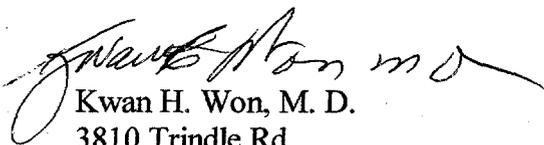
Continued attempts by organized audiologists to become the gatekeepers for hearing aid dispensing are self-serving and only increase the cost of service to the hearing impaired public. The physician is the only one trained to diagnose and recommend a course of action for the patient.

Hearing instrument specialists and audiologists are both equally capable of providing hearing aid services following a medical evaluation by a physician.

Physicians, hearing instrument specialists and audiologists all play an important role in servicing the hearing impaired. Most importantly, however, the process should start with the physician. To remove the medical clearance from the Federal guidelines would only cause disruption and confusion. Each state would have to reformulate their regulations now in place that the proposed FDA regulation would supersede.

Please do not let the FDA put forth this proposed rule that would impede access to needed hearing health care services for millions of Americans.

Sincerely,



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