The Audiology Offices to monitor progress on over-the-counter hearing aids

Dr. Ann DePaolo Wietsma of The Audiology Offices recently announced she supports over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids and wanted to share current consumer information pertaining to President Joe Biden’s recent executive order (EO) and hearing aids.

The Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act, part of the Food and Drug Administration Reauthorization Act of 2017, will improve public accessibility and affordability with OTC hearing aids. This Act will enable adults with mild-to-moderate hearing loss access to OTC devices without being seen by a hearing care professional. This legislation mandated that the FDA create and regulate a category of OTC hearing aids.

The American Academy of Audiology recently reported that on July 9, 2021, President Biden issued an EO aimed at improving competition and updating anti-trust guidance in a wide range of sectors including health care, technology, banking, and labor. Hearing aids were identified in this EO. The summary material of the EO does not elaborate on any details regarding the OTC hearing aids other than to suggest significant cost savings to the American public with their release.

The order directs federal agencies to promulgate official rule-making to implement the policies outlined in the document. The EO notes that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not yet issued rules for the OTC hearing aids. To advance this identified area for competition, President Biden is directing the Health and Human Services Agency “to consider issuing proposed rules within 120 days for allowing hearing aids to be sold over the counter.”

Dr. Wietsma said The Audiology Offices will monitor the development of the FDA regulations and will be available for advice and support as information becomes available.

Dr. Wietsma urges consumers suffering from hearing loss to obtain a comprehensive audiology evaluation prior to purchasing OTC or online devices. Most insurances cover the cost of the evaluation when performed by an audiologist. Audiologists are educated with a masters or doctoral degree. An audiology evaluation will determine the degree and cause of hearing loss, refer for medical intervention when necessary, and implement an effective management plan.

The Audiology Offices provides comprehensive hearing health care solutions and recommendations to patients of all ages. Since 2001, the team of expert professionals has served the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula with office locations in Kilmarnock, Gloucester and Warsaw. They also partner with area physicians to help patients experience comprehensive care.