

Date:

To Whom It May Concern:

I recently received a letter from you stating that you had denied my doctor's request for coverage of the BAHA (Bone Anchored Hearing Assistive) Device. In your letter, you mention that my Benefit Plan Document states that Hearing Aids are not a covered benefit. I understand that my policy does not cover hearing aids. I am not expecting or asking for coverage of the actual hearing device itself. What I have a right to expect, however, is coverage for the cost of the implantation of a prosthetic screw into my skull, which will enable me to use the BAHA device.

I had surgery to remove a tumor from behind one ear. As a result, I no longer have a functional ear on that side of my head, and am unable to use a traditional hearing aid. My inner ear on the good side, however, remains healthy. Research shows that the best way to access that inner ear and restore hearing is with the use of the BAHA device.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a "hearing-aid" as "*an electronic device usually worn by a person for amplifying sound before it reaches the receptor organs.*" Strictly speaking, the BAHA device does not fit this definition, as it, in concept, does not exist specifically to amplify sound for replacement into the ear canal. Instead, it converts sound into vibrations which are transmitted to the skull through a titanium post-coupling screw that is implanted into the skull behind the ear. Those vibrations are picked up by the inner ear, which allows the individual to hear.

Again, I am not asking for coverage of the actual BAHA device itself. I am requesting coverage for the surgical procedure to implant a prosthetic screw into my skull. The titanium screw by itself does not enable me to hear – it is not a hearing aid – it is just a prosthesis. This surgery should be considered a means for correcting a functional impairment caused by my previous surgery. The prosthetic screw will allow me to purchase and utilize the BAHA device so that my hearing can be restored.

I am appealing your original decision with the hope that you will reconsider this request (now that I have explained the situation more fully) and allow coverage for this procedure. Any questions or requests for further information can be directed to me at the address or phone number listed above. Or you may contact my doctor, Dr. Loren J. Bartels (4 Columbia Drive, Suite 610, Tampa, FL 33606, 813-844-4900). Thanks in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cc: Loren J Bartels MD FACS