



October 15, 2013

United Healthcare
NQC Appeals Coordinator
9050 Centre Pointe Drive #400
West Chester, OH 45069

RE: Letter of Appeal

UnitedHealthcare NQC Appeals Coordinator,

It is imperative that you revoke your decision to discontinue my participation in the Medicare Advantage network for the following reasons. My letter of appeal asks that you consider the severe consequences your decision would carry for my patients.

At present, I have upwards of 35 patients participating in UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage Network. As senior citizens, most of them have complicated medical conditions and histories. The majority of them have been under my care for *over a decade*. In the course of this time, I have acquired an in-depth knowledge of their ailments, treatments, and complex treatment side-effects. It is crucial to them that I am familiar with what they are willing to try, what they fear, and what forms of conversation are most conducive to setting them on a path of recovery. Because of my acquired sensitivity to their proclivities and apprehensions, they now have a firm belief in my capacity to reliably help their medical issues. This is an *indispensable* condition of effective treatment.

You can appreciate that senior citizens both have intricate medical conditions and have difficulty adjusting to new environments. This combination makes the matter far less straightforward than simply giving them a new doctor to which they will adjust. It takes many years—*years I have already spent*—to develop the trust necessary for an effective doctor-patient relationship. For them to start over again is not only difficult, but medically hazardous. Let me be direct. As a doctor, it is my professional opinion that, for most of my senior citizen patients, it would be medically suspect to change doctors.

To be concrete, take the following example. One of my patients, a war veteran, currently suffers cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy. We have worked closely to build a human relation, because it is crucial under such a severe illness that the patient feels a human connection with his doctor. Over time, we have developed a trusting relation that has contributed toward his path of recovery. Frankly speaking, demanding that he change doctors at this stage would be inhumane.

From a business perspective, consider the following points. For all intents and purposes, most of the patients who will be severed from my care will end up in emergency rooms. In their stress and confusion, it is unlikely that they will have the capacity to find a new doctor quickly. I'm sure having more of your patients in emergency rooms is more fiscally damaging. Time and again, I have worked with the very patients you seek to discontinue from my care to keep them from emergency rooms. This has been one of my central commitments, both to my patients and to keeping healthcare manageable for our society.

There is currently a shortage of Primary Care Physicians (PCPs). With the millions who are quickly becoming insured under the new law, physicians will be overwhelmed. My patients will have a difficult time finding new doctors. Because the medical situations of my patients is complex and sensitive, the difficulty they will go through to find a new doctor will most likely exacerbate their conditions.

At this time (10/1/2013–12/31/2013), there is an open enrollment period for Medicare patients. I have received calls every day from potential patients under the UHC Medicare Advantage plan who want me as their doctor. Under your amendment, I have to tell them that I cannot accept them as new patients. They are very irritated and distressed, thinking that I am not taking them for financial reasons. This creates hostile conditions between my potential patients and myself, which thereby institutes a split between us. This unfair to both parties. It prevents me from doing my job as a doctor, and their job of staying healthy.

For the duration of our partnership, I have participated in a number of your different medical plans. Most importantly, I have participated in your community plan for over 10 years. This has not been especially profitable for me, but it is a commitment I make to serve our community. I have loyally and carefully upheld our agreement. Now I ask that you do the same, even under the pressures you face.

When our government designed the Affordable Care Act, they promised that those members who are happy with their situation will not have to change doctors. Your proposed decision invalidates this promise, endangering the well-being of the American people. I want to remind you that healthcare is not about numbers, but about concrete, vulnerable human beings. Please don't sacrifice my patients in the name of a business decision.

If you deny or fail to honor our appeal, I want to make clear that my patients and I will continue to push this matter. We will not allow healthcare to move in this direction.

Against current political trends, we must work together to keep healthcare moving forward, not backward. The explicit mission of your organization is to make health-care personal, accessible, and geared towards patient-doctor relations. It is my expectation that your public commitments are practically endorsable, that is, not a matter of words.

Sincerely,

 D.O.