

To our patients, fellow Alaskans,

It has been our great pleasure to provide you, your family, and the Alaska community quality ear, nose and throat healthcare for the past 15 years. Through your continued support and referrals, our practice has grown, allowing us to bring healthcare services to our community that might otherwise remain unavailable.

There have been many significant milestones along the way. From the beginning, we have sought to be a local center of excellence in the management of nasal and sinus disease. In 2007, we recruited Alaska's first voice specialist to the practice. In 2011, we added Anchorage's first physician-supervised audiology service. This past year we proudly welcomed Alaska's first fellowship-trained neuro-otologist. Along the way, we have built a work family that provides good jobs to some twenty Alaskans.

One of the advantages of living in an area where health insurance companies have not been able to tell you which doctors you can see and which you cannot is that we have had to win your loyalty through good service and excellent care. If ever you were unhappy with our service, you could freely switch your care to a competing practice. Our local success is a testament to the fact that we have provided you and the community superior care for many years.

Recently, it has come to our attention that Premera Blue Cross and Aetna health insurance plans have begun encouraging our patients to seek surgical services out of state. In fact, the Anchorage physician community was issued a three-page list of services that health insurance firms intend to direct out of state for care. We call this practice "medical tourism".

You should understand that the majority of surgical services are covered by a 90 day global period under most insurance policies. That means that, for 90 days after your surgery, your surgeon is obligated to provide you postoperative care and manage any complications related to your surgery. In fact, a significant component of the fee your out of state surgeon receives is designed to cover the cost of any potential care that you might require during this period.

At ACENT, we pride ourselves on providing excellent surgical and postoperative care. We feel that good postoperative care is integral to ensuring good surgical outcomes. You have come to expect such care from us and you should expect the same from any surgeon who treats you. We think it is bad medical practice to operate on patients and never see them again in follow up.

We respect your right to choose where you receive healthcare and from whom, particularly when it comes to surgery. However, should you choose to seek surgery from an out-of-state surgeon, we will conclude that you have transferred your care for the surgery to that surgeon's practice. Should you require medical care related to your surgery during the global period, you should expect that all such services will be provided by your out-of-state surgeon. Furthermore, your health insurance plan should cover the cost of any postoperative care you may require.

It has been an honor to provide quality healthcare to you and all Alaskans, and it has been a distinct pleasure to earn your loyalty. We look forward to providing you excellent care for years to come, including surgery in Alaska by surgeons in Alaska.

Yours, in health,