

Publication: Bloomberg BNA Health Insurance Report
Date: September 26, 2013
UMV: Not available

Bloomberg BNA

Minnesota

Broker Enters Minnesota Market Aimed At Helping Consumers Navigate Health Care

By [Mark Wolski](#)

Sept. 26 — Gravie, a Minneapolis-based health insurance broker, Sept. 23 announced its formation and its intent to help individuals choose, buy and pay for health insurance given the changes in the industry.



The company said it will help both individuals and employers contemplating ending their group insurance plans. It said it will begin operations in November, allowing it to help consumers facing states' health insurance exchanges for the first time.

Abir Sen, co-founder and chief executive officer of Gravie, said the brokerage will be free to consumers. Its income, he said, will be derived from commissions from insurers and distribution fees from other products and services it offers through its platform.

According to Sen, Gravie will work by helping consumers determine which insurance plan will suit them best by examining their specific situations and then scouring both the state exchange and the private market. He said the company won't only offer insight on the best product fit for an individual's needs, but will also identify and pursue subsidy eligibility on the person's behalf.

As such, he said, it will help consumers figure out the cost of their plans, less any tax credits they might be eligible for. He said those who use Gravie will be able to pay for their insurance through the company. It will aggregate customers' money from the accounts they would like to use—checking, savings or credit card—along with any money contributed by employers, and pay the appropriate insurers, he said.

He added that Gravie will also help consumers apply for tax credits, as well as help manage the entire credit process for them. It will also provide them an online platform that will allow them to manage their health care in one place, he said.

Conduit for Solving Problems

Sen said Gravie will also try to help its customers after they have purchased a health plan. He said the company wants to be the conduit for solving health insurance problems, whether the issue is a claim being denied or a hospital bill that doesn't make sense.

He said no company is currently doing what Gravie is seeking to do. However, he said, competition is likely if the company gains traction in the health-care market.

Eileen Smith, spokeswoman for the Minnesota Council of Health Plans, told BNA Sept. 25 that it should be noted that there are likely to be plenty of resources available to help people understand health insurance exchanges and the Affordable Care Act. Consumer groups, health plans and insurance brokers will all be vying to help consumers understand the changes occurring in health insurance, she said.

She added, however, that she can't discount what Gravie is trying to do. Anything that helps consumers get, understand and use their health insurance has to be seen as a positive development, she said.

Officials with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota did not return calls from Bloomberg BNA. To contact the reporter on this story: Mark Wolski in St. Paul, Minn., at mwolski@bna.com
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For More Information

More information on Gravie can be found on its website at <http://www.gravie.com>.