



Concierge Medicine

You've seen them on TV—in “Royal Pains” and “Rush”—but what do concierge doctors do in real life?

Concierge medicine—sometimes referred to as personalized healthcare or retainer medicine—has gained significant momentum in recent years, with about 5000 doctors in the U.S. following this model.

As the Affordable Care Act took effect and newly insured patients began flooding medical offices, many doctors and patients grew frustrated with longer wait times for shorter appointments. Feeling squeezed and unable to serve their patients as comprehensively as they'd like, some doctors transformed their practices using the concierge approach, allowing them to lighten their caseload and offer more proactive care that better meets their patients' needs.

What can patients expect to gain—and spend—on concierge care? It all depends on what you hope to get from your healthcare experience. There's a spectrum of options, but here are a few key differences to consider to determine if this personalized approach is right for you and your family.

Membership Cost. Concierge membership costs are often based on an annual fee that can range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars per person, with some discounts for other family members. The fee largely depends on the level and amount of services included in the concierge program. In some practices, this may be in addition to other medical insurance premiums.

Some practices use a Fee for Care (FFC) model, in which a retainer fee covers all services, with some exceptions (e.g., lab work, x-rays) charged on a cash basis. Others offer a Fee for Extra Care (FEC)

arrangement, similar to FFCs, but bill the patient's insurance for these additional services.

In another model, such as MDVIP, patients pay an annual membership fee for a comprehensive wellness program that includes extensive screenings and tests not normally covered by insurance, along with extra conveniences, like 24/7 doctor availability. In this model, standard medical services (e.g., sick visits, hospital care) continue to be billed to insurance.

Doctor Availability. Because most concierge doctors care for a fraction of the patients seen in conventional primary care practices—typically 300 to 600 patients as compared with 2000 to 3000—they're able to offer increased availability, such as unrushed routine appointments, same-day or next-day visits, more out-of-office contact with patients via email and cell phone, and coordination of specialty care. Offerings like these are fairly standard among concierge practices.

What can be harder to find are doctors who offer the personalized care our parents and grandparents enjoyed—doctors who make house calls, serve as attending physicians for hospital stays and offer community events to be present in all aspects of their patients' lives. These are all part of Dr. Cooperstein's MDVIP practice.

Preventive Services. Personalized medicine has given many doctors the time required to not only fully address patients' immediate health issues, but also to focus on an often overlooked part of patient care: disease prevention.

To make prevention a priority, some concierge doctors perform comprehensive lab work to catch early warning signs that might not present themselves otherwise. This preventive approach has proven to be valuable and even life-saving when serious conditions like cancer and cardiac issues are uncovered early.

Wellness Services. Select concierge practices take preventive care a step further by working with you to develop an annual wellness plan that addresses your specific lab results and your individual needs and goals. This could mean concrete steps to help you lose weight the healthy way, better manage a chronic condition, or even reduce or eliminate medications.

If this is important to you, look for a concierge practice that prioritizes well care in addition to sick care.

Not just for the rich anymore.

A New Option. In today's doctors' offices, it's sometimes easy to forget your healthcare is not a transaction; it's an investment. The concierge medicine model allows you to prioritize aspects of your well-being that matter most to you: a middle-of-the-night phone call to your doctor, a comprehensive health screening, a customized weight-loss plan.

Like most worthwhile investments, you can't know the long-term payoff upfront. But with a potential return of a longer, healthier life, more and more patients agree it's worth a try.

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Dr. Gary Cooperstein, D.O., a Board Certified Family Physician and Senior FAA Medical Examiner, founded Whitford Family Medicine, a full-service personalized healthcare practice in Downingtown, in 1989. Driven by his commitment to preventive health and wellness, he joined the MDVIP national network of primary care physicians in 2014. Learn more at MDVIP.com/GaryCoopersteinDO.

MDVIP is a personalized, preventative healthcare program that empowers people to lead the healthiest lives possible.