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A Direct Access Physician

Dr. Bob

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While the New Year will hopefully present one with a moment to recover from the dizzying whirlwind of the holiday season, it can also serve as a time to take stock of the triumphs and struggles of the previous year. Perhaps like many Americans, you experienced the frustration of attending to your health within the larger-than-life, highly bureaucratic system that makes receiving individual attention nearly impossible. You would not be alone if you believed that this is your only option.

“Conveyor Belt” medicine has become the unfortunate by-product of a healthcare infrastructure in which doctors are saddled with high-cost malpractice insurance rates, low reimbursement rates by insurance companies and Medicare and declining salaries in the face of growing overhead costs. A large number of physicians sadly find that, in order to keep their practices afloat, they must build a patient roster of upwards of 2500 patients, resulting in very little time to care for those very same individuals. Doctors who work for large groups sometimes even face dismissal if they do not serve a designated number of patients. It seems that the days when once could count on the family doctor to make a simple house call are long gone, or are they?

The answer to this question is, increasingly, no. Existing simultaneously with the aforementioned state of affairs is the rising trend of concierge medicine. More and more doctors are blazing a trail (or arguably, rediscovering one) outside the confines of the prevailing system, by opening private practices in which the billing of insurance companies for services rendered is eschewed for annual fees paid directly by patients. Although they must still have insurance for catastrophic care such as x-rays, medication, visits to specialists and hospitalization, the patient who is one of 150 (rather than 2000) other patients can count on a significant amount of much deserved attention.

Patients Should Be Seen ... And Heard

Dr. Robert Taylor of Roseville, who has maintained a private practice for over 17 years and who offers same-day appointments, states “the more time you spend with people, the more you know. It’s important to me that my patients feel and are treated like family.

Given this, it is no wonder that, according to the June 2003 issue of the [New England Journal of Medicine](#), an analysis of medical care in this country has revealed that only 59.4% of all preventative care (i.e. screening exams) is delivered, while only 58.5% of follow-up care occurs. It stands to reason that the current face-off between inroads in medicine and rising incidences of life-threatening illness needn’t end in tragic statistics, particularly if support of concierge practices like Taylor’s continue to gain popularity.

Trickle Down Economics: Productivity and The Business of Health

According to Dr. Taylor, the word concierge hails from France and originally referred to one who served the king so that he could rule the country. And although the word now brings to mind, for many, the position of a bell-hop, he likens concierge doctors to medics on the beaches of Normandy, serving the needs of soldiers so that they can continue to fight. For corporate movers and shakers and busy professionals in particular, time is money. In all truth, however, so is their health. Time waits for no one, as the saying goes, but commerce similarly does not cease for personal appointments or unforeseen health crises.

In the end, Dr. Taylor of Roseville feels that practicing concierge medicine allows him to remember what an honor and privilege it is to be a doctor. He states, "I am going to spend the last part of my career as I've always dreamed. There is no reason why a doctor should be prevented from treating patients the way my own father did. I want this generation and the next to feel as excited about entering the medical profession as he did, and I want our kids to experience the same kind of care that both he and members of previous generations were able to provide."

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