

Concierge Medicine Optimizing Your health care

You look at your watch and realize that you've been sitting in the doctor's waiting room for almost 2 hours. Your cell phone is vibrating, your own work is waiting, your temperature is rising, and you're still sitting there.

Written by Ivar E. Roth

When you finally make it into the doctor's office, he gives you about 15 minutes, a pat on the back, and a promise that he'll call you with your test results in a few days. Naturally, you have to make the call, and you have to sit there on hold, once again waiting.

If there are no health problems, the waiting is just a nuisance. When time is critical to addressing health problems, the doctors and their offices seem to be getting in the way of good care.

At best there's a lack of communication between doctor and patient. At worst the experience is so frustrating that it discourages people from taking proper care of their health. In any case, there's something wrong with this picture.

In 1996 two physicians involved with the Seattle Super Sonics decided that other patients might like to get the same kind of customized health care as the basketball team members did, removing the clutter that characterizes much of today's medicine. The doctors developed a retainer-based medical service providing superior, personalized health care to a limited number of people.

Concierge care, also known as boutique medicine, or executive health care, offers patients personal access to their physician on short notice, or during non-standard hours. These patients get 24/7 access to their physicians, same-day appointments, reduced in-office waiting time, an enhanced yearly health exam, house calls, and other services not generally covered by insurers or generally available from doctors.

The attraction of "concierge medicine" is easy to understand. Doctors spend time with their patients and really take charge of their care.

Physicians also build networks of specialists to see their patients if the need arises. Referrals can go all over the country or all over the world. The key question is, "Does it make medical sense?" rather than "Is it covered by insurance?"

Concierge medicine is not insurance. Rather, it is patient-focused health care that improves the quality of treatment by making the doctor the head of the health care team. For the cost of a latte a day, concierge medicine provides coordinated care with the extra touches – such as nurses, physical therapists, home health aides, support groups, and global assistance – that take care of the whole patient. While most concierge physicians accept various forms of insurance but collect the added fee for added services, some of the doctors have cash-only practices.



Currently, concierge medicine is the only field of medicine that is increasing in size with 7 percent of the nation's doctors involved in it and a 500 percent growth rate. In Orange County there are 62 concierge physicians, 15 of whom are part of Concierge Physicians of Orange County, an organization of concierge physicians dedicated to the art of direct care medical practices, improving patient care and satisfaction through education, and innovative business solutions for concierge medical practices. Concierge Physicians of Orange County is based on the belief that patients' needs are of the utmost importance, and the physicians are committed to meeting those needs by providing a true medical home for the patient in a complex health care environment.

"We're going back to basics," explains Dr. Ivar Roth, a Newport Beach podiatrist with a master's degree in public health. "Patients and doctors are communicating with each other. The patient lives a better and longer life as a result of getting better medicine."

If you are interested in attending a community open-house event regarding concierge medicine, please attend "The Art of Medicine" on July 16th at Hoag Hospital, Building #44 (located on lower campus, across from Cancer Center), Suite #180, Conference Rooms 1 & 2 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

TO RSVP FOR THE OPEN HOUSE



Ivar E. Roth, D.P.M., M.P.H.

To RSVP and for additional information, please contact: Ivar Roth, D.P.M./M.P.H., 351 Hospital Road Suite #407, Newport Beach, CA 92663

Phone: (949) 650-1147; e-mail: ifabs@earthlink.net or Callie Rutter, 850 Hal-yard, Newport Beach, CA 92663; phone: (949) 678-5074; e-mail: callierutter@sbcglobal.net or check the website at www.theconciergedoctors.com.