

# House calls concierge



Excerpts from an article by Andy Oakes-Lottridge, MD

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What exactly is house call concierge medicine?

This practice model is sometimes called direct practice or private-pay medical practice. While there is large variation among practices, there are some basic similarities.

First started in the early 1990s in Seattle, it was pioneered in Florida in 1998 by Dr. Gary Price, who is also the current chairman of the board and past president of the American Academy of Private Physicians. Concierge medicine is “expanding exponentially because it’s a better system... because it restores the doctor-patient relationship... it gets the third party payer out of the way and removes the doctor’s conflicts of interest because he is being paid only by the patient. Direct practice means there is a direct financial relationship with patients and with nobody else...” Dr. Price says.

Since 1998, concierge medical practices have grown. Doctors don’t bill insurance for services. Instead, patients pay a retainer, typically \$100 to \$350 or more a month. In return, doctors provide primary care services and agree to limit their patient load to 300-800 patients. This allows doctors to have fewer patients and still remain profitable. It also allows some doctors to provide other services, since each practice may offer services in a slightly different manner. Some may exclusively do home visits, or offer pediatric services as well. Others offer home visits but primarily offer medical services in an office setting.

What services are provided? This requires a full disclosure and thorough conversation between all prospective patients and the physician. Some practices also will bill your insurance in addition to charging a fee. The basics usually include: office and home visits, around-the-clock access by phone and email, same-day appointments, personally coordinating specialty care, and providing bedside attention in the hospital.