

Concierge Medicine

There's a new trend in healthcare, and it's gaining momentum in our area.

By Sarah Emily Gilbert

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For the past few years, Dr. Lynne B. Kossow and Dr. Barbara A. Brown of Princeton Lifestyle Medicine have offered their patients far more than the traditional primary care practice. Most doctors see 25-30 patients a day for an average of 15 minutes, but Drs. Kossow and Brown see six to eight patients a day for up to an hour. In addition to providing treatment for acute illnesses, the doctors act as their clients' healthcare coaches through Lifestyle Medicine, a scientific approach to patient wellness by effecting changes in areas such as diet, physical activity, and stress management. With the current shortage of primary care physicians and the abundance of high volume practices, this type of individualized attention is rare. However, by switching to a concierge format, doctors like Kossow and Brown are able to practice medicine that consists of this broad-spectrum care.

Concierge medicine, also known as retainer-based medicine, is an umbrella term for private medical care wherein patients pay an out-of-pocket fee in exchange for enhanced care. Born in the 1990s, concierge medicine was once thought of as a service for the wealthy that charged patients a lofty fee for luxury medicine. In recent years, it has evolved to accommodate patients across all income brackets, leading to expanding interest among patients and their primary care doctors.

According to a survey released by the American Academy of Private Physicians at the AAPP 2015 Fall Summit, more than 45 percent of 862 independent physicians would consider a concierge or similar membership model in the next three years. This may be due in part to our aging population needing increased and varied medical services, leading to an imbalanced patient/doctor ratio. The implementation of the Affordable Care Act has increased the number of insured patients, putting a further strain on primary care doctors. As a result, physicians are often unable to dedicate enough time to each patient. In the hopes of increasing both job and patient satisfaction in a financially sustainable way, primary physicians like Dr. Kossow and Dr. Brown are looking toward concierge medicine.

"Where conventional medicine is failing is in the prevention and reversal of chronic diseases that are becoming an epidemic in the United States today," explain the doctors. "The current insurance model is built upon a problem-based economic reimbursement that encourages doctors to address medical problems very quickly. This leads to most doctors rushing to see 25-30 patients per day in order to make ends meet. . . This is not how we have ever practiced. We always want to have the time to address the root cause of diseases that are preventable today."

Lifestyle Medicine is a 21st century approach to healthcare that consolidates the very best characteristics of traditional medicine with the profound impact of lifestyle behaviors on health. As our program grew, it became readily apparent to us that integrating Lifestyle Medicine into our internal medicine practice was the best way for us to continue to provide exceptional care. We feel that the concierge model is the only way to effectively do that.



Dr. Barbara A. Brown (left) and Dr. Lynne B. Kossow of Princeton Lifestyle Medicine.

Concierge medical practices come in various forms, including those that reject insurance plans all together, but this is not the case for Princeton Lifestyle Medicine. Dr. Kossow and Dr. Brown accept insurance for all covered medical services. In addition, their patients pay an annual fee of \$1,500 for the Lifestyle Medicine Concierge program, which gives them access to an elevated level of care. Trained at the Institute of Lifestyle Medicine at Harvard Medical School, the doctors are at the vanguard of their field, having lectured about their practice development model at The Institute of Lifestyle Medicine Conference in 2015. They are also members of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine and the American College of Physicians. They are among the first physicians to become board certified in Lifestyle Medicine, as well as maintaining their board certifications in internal medicine.

Dr. Kossow and Dr. Brown's practice is unique in that it offers patients comprehensive conventional medical care combined with lifestyle counseling. Patients interested in a natural approach to disease prevention are provided in-depth, individualized coaching based on their needs. The doctors can assist with everything from quitting smoking to creating a manageable diet and exercise plan.

According to the doctors, this is an evidence-based practice that has been shown to prevent, reverse, or slow down heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure, diabetes, dementia, and some cancers. The concierge model offers Princeton Lifestyle Medicine patients additional benefits including access to the doctors' emails, cell phone numbers, and private phone line, extended patient office visits, a one-hour consultation, and same or next day appointments. As a result, patients see Drs. Kossow and Brown not only as accomplished medical doctors, but health advocates, mentors, and even friends.

"Our practice structure allows us to spend more time educating our patients about what may be going on with them medically," the doctors explain. "We are better able to work with them as partners in their care and advocate for them with their specialists or if they are in the hospital. We provide tremendous support and guidance to them and their caretakers or family. We are happy to have this enhanced communication with our patients. It allows us to make social visits when they are hospitalized at the University Medical Center of Princeton at Plainsboro so that we can stay in close touch while they are receiving care."

Concierge practices like Princeton Lifestyle Medicine focus the healthcare system on its most vital component: the patient-doctor relationship. The model emphasizes quality care instead of quick care, benefitting both parties. Dr. Brown and Kossow are now board certified as specialists in the practice of Lifestyle Medicine and are the only physicians in the Princeton area who are board certified in both Internal Medicine and Lifestyle Medicine. As leaders in both concierge and Lifestyle medicine, it comes as no surprise that Dr. Kossow and Dr. Brown are at the forefront of this effort, bringing Princeton into the future of healthcare. ●



The Princeton Lifestyle Medicine Concierge Program is \$1,500 per year. The fee can be paid monthly, quarterly, biannually, or annually, and credit cards are accepted as payment. All medical services are billed through the patient's insurance company as usual.

Princeton Lifestyle Medicine is located at 731 Alexander Road, Suite 200 in Princeton, New Jersey. For more information call 609.655.3800 or visit www.princetonlifestylemedicine.com.