

# Boca Life

## THE TOP DOCS

304 OF THE VERY  
BEST IN 44  
SPECIALTIES

HEALTHY  
STAYCATIONS  
*15 SOUTH  
FLORIDA RESORTS  
WITH WELLNESS  
OFFERINGS*

UP AND  
AWAY  
*PREVIEW THE  
FORD LAUDERDALE  
AIR SHOW*  
(No, this isn't a typo)

*Best of Boca Raton  
& Delray Beach*





# THE DOCTOR IS (ALWAYS) IN

*Far-out appointments, crowded waiting rooms, short visits with the doctor. These characteristics have become standard when seeing a primary physician, but local doctors have set out to change that with concierge medicine morphing the landscape of modern-day treatment.*

By Jessica Tzikas

The term “concierge doctor” has been around for a while. “It started more than 15 years ago,” says Dr. Steven E. Reznick, who owns a concierge practice in Boca Raton. “The idea was that doctors could have a smaller census of patients who required more attention and were willing to pay a fee to get that attention.”

While physicians around the country began to partake in a form of concierge medicine, it was here in Boca Raton where the term originated—all thanks to two local internal medicine specialists who started a company called MDVIP.

“MDVIP has been around for 16 years,” says Bret Jorgensen, CEO of MDVIP. “Now we have a national network of personalized preventive care physicians and concierge doctors who focus on getting people more engaged in their health.”

Those two Boca-based internists—Dr. Bernard Kaminetsky and Dr. Robert Colton, now both retired (Kaminetsky acts as a national spokesperson for MDVIP)—wanted doctors to have a bigger impact, and more time, with their patients. Their idea grew into what is now a hugely successful model, with doctors in 43 states plus Washington, D.C., serving 270,000 member patients, and growing.

“We’re confident it will continue to attract doctors and patients,” Bret Jorgensen says. “Where we find value is strengthening the relationship between doctor and patient, and we think that’s where the magic is.”

Dr. David Levey inherited his practice almost 10 years ago from one of those originators—Dr. Kaminetsky—and never looked back. “I feel like, with just a raised eyebrow, I can understand what’s happening to my patients,” says Levey, whose offices are located on Clint Moore Road in West Boca Raton. “It’s such an intense, close doctor-patient relationship, and I feel [the MDVIP model] has made me a much better doctor and communicator; I could not have imagined more

satisfaction professionally.”

Patients who see Levey, and similar concierge doctors outside the MDVIP realm, can expect many things: clean, updated waiting rooms (that are usually vacant), visits that don’t feel rushed and the doctor’s personal cell phone number. “I’d rather get woken up at 2 a.m. with a small problem than have the patient be considerate about my sleep and have a major problem at 6 a.m.,” says Reznick about why he gives out his cell number.

Whether it’s the flu or congestive heart failure, Dr. Mitchell Karl, whose concierge services are available in Boca, says all of his patients receive comprehensive care. The board-certified internal medicine and cardiology doctor has been on staff at Boca Raton Regional Hospital for more than 25 years and offers 24/7 access, house calls and same-day, after-hours and weekend appointments.

And while all of these are significant aspects of concierge care, perhaps the most important is prevention. “There is organization and there is the ability to get to know your patients,” says Dr. Richard Levine, who runs Priority Concierge MD in Boca Raton. “If my patient needs something, I can localize treatments for them; if they move up north for a few months, I can find the best hospitals.”

It’s that level of communication—and trust—that gives more complicated patients peace of mind when it comes to their care. From coordinating specialists to informing patients on new health care laws, a concierge doctor’s duties go be-



(above) Dr. Richard Levine  
(right) MDVIP affiliated physician Dr. David Levey with a patient

yond a yearly visit.

“The idea [of concierge medicine] is to give patients access and availability,” Reznick says. “If you guarantee same-day appointments, you help them navigate the complicated health care system, and if they need a specialty physician, you can steer them to the better ones.”

Levine, who works side-by-side with Reznick in Boca Raton, agrees. “We are able to coordinate care and give a specialized opinion, which helps [patients] get a proper diagnosis,” he says. “With the inability to read the future about health care, it’s so important to have someone who knows them and who can build a relationship to help guide them through the changes.”

Many of those complicated patients lie within the elderly community, an age bracket that local doctors devote much of their time to. “I started seeing patients in Boca Raton in 1979 when I was in my late 20s, early 30s, and as those patients got older, and had age-associated chronic illnesses develop, they became more complex and began seeing more physicians in different specialties,” Reznick says. “These people were getting older and required more time and more concentration than a 10-minute appointment could give them. So it was either take care of a large population and not be very comprehensive, or limit your patient base and do better with them.”

Patients in the area agree, crediting accessibility, time and personal care for reasons to join this type of practice. “As you get older you tend to need more doctor care,” says Jeff Khan, a patient who has been seeing Levine for about five years. “When you’re not feeling well and you’re a senior citizen, you don’t want someone to say they can’t see you for four days. With Dr. Levine, you can always get in no later than the next day, and if I’m having problems, I want someone I can turn to and either get advice or direct me in the right direction.”

“Everything is much more per-



sonal,” Khan adds. “The doctor is never in a rush, and it becomes much more of a relationship.”

But it all comes at a price. Some doctors around the country can charge up to \$20,000 for yearly concierge care. Here in Boca, the cost of joining a concierge practice ranges from about

\$1,500 to \$1,850 annually on top of insurance, with prices rising. “My fee was set 11 years ago at \$1,800,” Levine says. “It hasn’t changed since then, until now, where it has been bumped up about \$50.”

Often the additional cost proves to be worth it. Local doctors understand

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- Bret Jorgensen



patients' needs, and if they have a sudden financial reversal, either due to employment loss or lower income, there are scholarships and programs in place to help patients get the care they need without the monetary strain. "[Levine and I] have never asked anyone to leave for financial reasons," Reznick says. "We both have a lot of patients on scholarships, and I have close to 100 patients who don't have a membership fee. They pay per visit because of personal financial reasons."

So how do you decide if this type of care is right for you? Local doctors suggest coming in for an initial meet-and-greet to get a feel for the office and doctor. It's also important to inquire about the following:

- *If you have a specific hospital you like, is the doctor on staff there?*
- *Do you have an understanding of all of the perks you gain access to?*
- *Do you and the doctor get along? Choosing a concierge practice should be viewed as a long-term commitment with someone you can trust and depend on.*

Even if you like the doctor's personality, there are still other factors to note before making the switch. Patients with an absence of medical issues, who see a doctor for a yearly routine checkup, may not reap the same benefits as those with more serious issues. But even if medical distresses aren't on your laundry list of personal concerns, there are other reasons—like traveling—that cause patients to rely on a concierge practice.

"Say you go to New York and get sick, or Boston, or LA or anywhere across the country, you can call your doctor and he will help coordinate a physician in that community," says Nancy Udell, director of media relations for MDVIP. Levey agrees, often referring his patients (many of whom are snowbirds) to similar physicians within the MDVIP network when they travel. "In the winter, it's usually my turn to give back and see people from other communities," he says.

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*The doctors have more time now to follow through and be there or follow up with a specialist.*

- Nancy Udell

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This type of treatment also applies to hospital visits or unforeseen surgical procedures. "The MDVIP doctor is the first person someone sees when they get out of surgery," Udell says. "The doctors have more time now to follow through and be there or follow up with a specialist."

Whether a doctor is within the MDVIP model or practicing on their own, their goal is the same: to provide comprehensive health care in order to keep patients strong and healthy.

"On a long-term basis, [we] are family doctors [who] get to know people over decades, through thick and thin, sick and wellness, and guide them through their health," Levine says. "And that's what internists do best." ■

MDVIP aims to keep its waiting room empty.