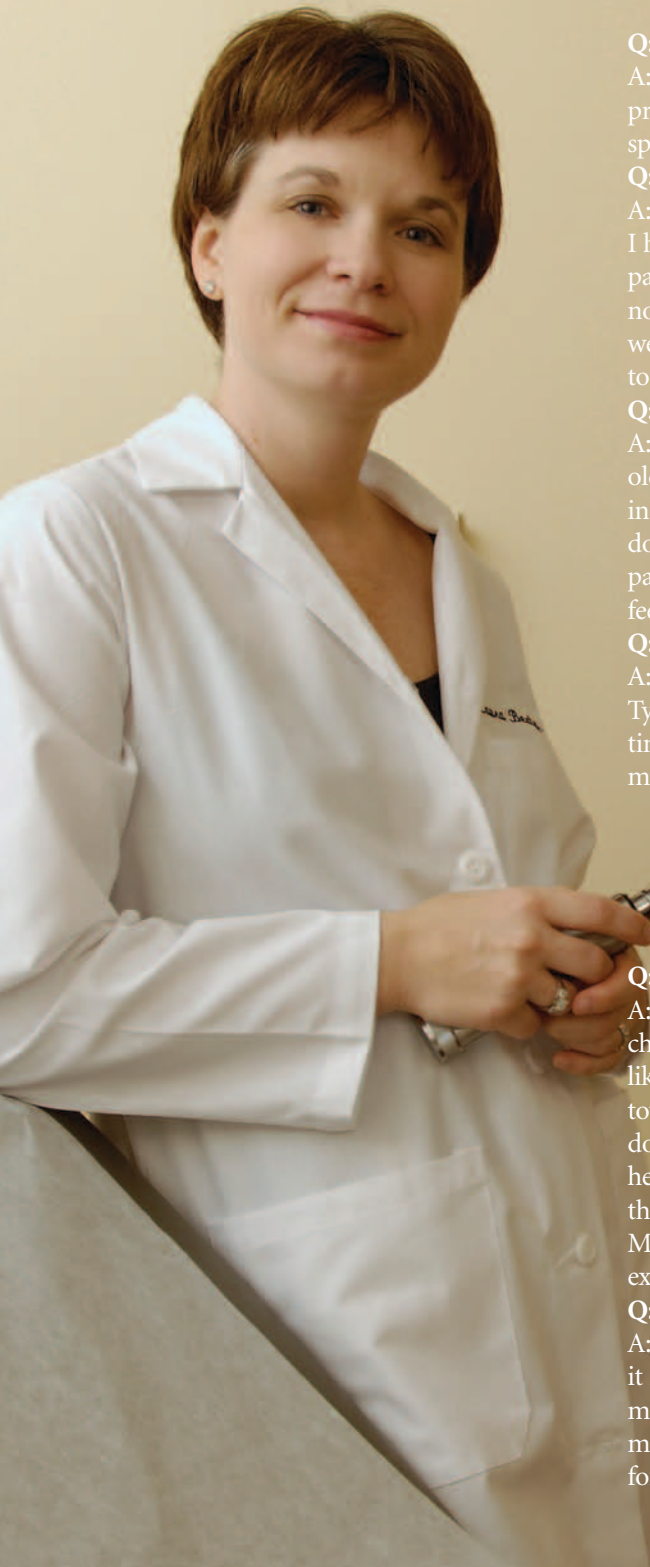


Dr. Laura Beaty

CONCIERGE MEDICAL PRACTICE



Q: What is concierge medicine?

A: Concierge medicine, very simply, is an alternative way for physicians to practice in which they limit the number of patients they see in order to spend more time with the patients they have for a fixed fee.

Q: How did you become a concierge doctor?

A: I was with WellStar for seven years and had a traditional medical practice. I had about 5,000 patients. Typically doctors have between 4,000 to 7,000 patients. I became frustrated. I was providing good medical care, and I had no complaints about WellStar, but I felt I wasn't providing the kind of care I went to medical school to provide. I didn't have time to truly dedicate myself to my patients.

Q: How does it work compared to other ways to practice medicine?

A: Well, there's only a couple of ways to go. As a doctor you can do it the old-fashioned way and not take any insurance — provide a fee for service — instead of billing the insurance company for \$100 and getting paid \$35. Or a doctor can go the concierge route, which is what I'm doing. I see about 300 patients for a fee of about \$1,200 (with discounts for family and such). The fee is above the co-pay that the patient pays with the insurance company.

Q: What are the advantages of concierge medicine?

A: Because I have fewer patients, I have more time to spend with each one. Typically a patient spends 15 minutes with a doctor and at least that much time filling out forms and going through all sorts of red tape. I spend 30 minutes with a patient and my patients don't have to wait in a waiting room.

Or I will go to their house or office. They have my home number and cell so they can call me. I will also go with them to specialists. But 15 minutes is not enough time to deal with the overall health of a patients; it's enough to fix a problem, but it's not enough time to talk to a patient.

Q: Why are business executives a prime market for concierge doctors?

A: Business executives don't have time to sit in a waiting room to have a check-up or be treated. A lot of executives will go to a major medical center, like the Mayo Clinic, for an annual physical and they won't have a doctor in town. With concierge medicine, they can still go to the clinic and have a local doctor and not have any of the hassles of dealing with our traditional health-care system. Another reason is for executives with children. Again, they don't have time to wait during sick hours for their kid to see a doctor. Many companies are considering offering concierge doctor services as an executive perk.

Q: Is this the path you expect medical care to take in the future?

A: The health-care system is broken and I can't fix it by myself. But the way it is now is not conducive to how I want to practice. I do see concierge medicine as a growing trend but it's not for everyone. But I think concierge medicine will be playing an increasing role in health-care options, especially for executives.

— Mary Welch