

# Concierge Medicine

## Transcript

I'm old enough to remember the time when patients had to fill out all the paperwork for health insurance claims. We hated it. Then the insurance industry came out with HMO and PPO plans, and told us, "Sign up for our plan and just bring your card to the doctor's office. No more paperwork for the patients." We loved that! But doctors hated it.

My ex was a software engineer, and he did a consulting job for a company that wrote software to help doctors do their insurance paperwork. He came home with horror stories about how complicated it was. Every insurance company has an individual contract with every practice, and it can change every year.

AND, most importantly, the doctor has no choice about anything beyond the diagnosis. The insurance contracts tell him what treatments to offer and what he will get paid for it.

Starting in 1996, many doctors have switched to concierge medical practices. Basically they gave up on making a living from insurance payments. By 2024, there were an estimated 4,000 doctors practicing concierge medicine. They charge a set fee for their patients, which ranges from about \$2,000 to \$10,000 per year for primary care.

Concierge doctors take on a small number of patients and provide first class service. The details vary from one doctor to another, so check the Internet postings for your area if you're interested. You still need insurance for other healthcare expenses, such as hospitals, specialists, imaging, lab tests, and prescriptions.

Unfortunately, this does nothing to improve access to healthcare for the majority of Americans who can't afford insurance plus concierge primary care. It does show us that doctors think the health insurance industry needs improvement.

Luigi Mangione told us the same thing from a patient's perspective.