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Doctors provide more personal care

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By: Martie Salt, News 14 Carolina

The average American doctor spends anywhere from seven to 10 minutes during a patient visit. But some patients are now demanding more time and less hassle from the medical community -- and they're willing to pay for it. In fact, they're turning to a service called the concierge doctor.

As she heads out of the office, Elizabeth Laffey, M.D., joins a growing number of doctors returning to the practice of house calls.

"It's not unheard of, we just forgot about it for the last 40, 50 years," she said.



Dr. Laffey says she can now give more personalized attention to each patient. doctor."

For the Brown family, that means no doctor's office waiting room, no exposure to sick patients, little time away from work and a newfound comfort.

"It's such a difference with the children," mom and patient Andrea Brown said. "They're able to stay in their own environment. They know their house, and now they know the

For a fee, concierge doctors like Laffey offer perks such as e-mail and personal cell phone access. Some escort patients to specialists. An added bonus: Laffey's average visit lasts an hour.

"We have a great deal of time to actually talk about lifestyle modification and diet, exercise and what they're actually willing to do," Laffey said.

While costs are higher in other parts of the United States, Laffey charges \$1,500 a year in Kirkwood, Mo. Her patients feel she's worth it.

"We have started the process of getting the entire physical done from head to toe -- things I would've put off for a very long time," Susan Knasel said.

For Laffey, going from a traditional to concierge practice has made medicine more fun.

"I actually get to know my patients. I actually get to understand what's going on in their lives," she said. "That personal touch that was unheard of at the other office."



There are an estimated 250 concierge practices in the country.

And she has a lighter patient load: 300 patients vs. the average 3,000 to 5,000.

There are an estimated 250 concierge practices in the country. Health experts say consumers should carefully consider the cost, their insurance coverage and their personal health situation before signing on with a concierge doctor.

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