

## Is a Concierge Model Right for Your Medical Practice? Four Questions to Ask Before You Transition

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The concierge model of medicine has grown significantly over the last decade, but a Warner Norcross & Judd LLP attorney encourages physicians to ask four key questions before making the transition.

Health lawyer Jack Marquis said that the concierge model continues to attract physicians who want to provide more focused care to a smaller number of patients than typically served in a traditional medical practice. Also known as retainer-based medicine, boutique practices and innovative medical practice design, concierge practices vary widely in structure, but typically offer patients enhanced access to their physician 24/7 phone calls, same-day or next-day appointments, e-mail communications, and other benefits in exchange for a monthly or annual retainer.

“Concierge medicine continues to be a growth industry,” said Marquis, who has helped scores of physicians and physician practices make the transition. “There are benefits to patients and physicians alike, but I caution doctors who are contemplating the switch to examine their practices before making a leap. Answering a few questions will be key in determining if a concierge model is right for your specific practice.”

Marquis said that physicians need to consider the following four questions before converting:

- **Where do you live?** Physicians need to be sure they live in a community with a large enough population base to support the transition from a traditional to a concierge practice. For example, a city/region with only 100,000 in population would likely not be large enough to support a solid concierge practice.
- **Can you opt out of Medicare?** While there are many varieties of concierge practices, Marquis notes that they come down to two basic types: Those that except Medicare and those that don't. “That's a really big fork in the road for physicians,” he explains. “If you can opt out of Medicare, financially, emotionally and otherwise, concierge medicine might be a good option to pursue. But for the doctor who says he doesn't want to leave his Medicare patients, that's a big fork in the road – and a major consideration.”
- **Do you have enough patients?** Physicians need to determine if they have enough patients willing to transition with them to create a sustainable business model. “This is the biggest angst that doctors go through before making a transition,” Marquis noted. “It becomes a matter of how risky is it for you when you don't really know?”

- **Are you willing to be aggressive with marketing?** Marquis noted that the single biggest key to successful transitions he has seen over the last decade is having an ongoing marketing program – not just advertising. “It is critical to keep new patients coming into the practice. That means physicians need to utilize all marketing tools available to them, such as existing patients, web sites, the media, etc.”

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