

CONCIERGE CONNECTIONS

News and information regarding concierge and membership medicine

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EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT HYBRID CONCIERGE: *but were too afraid to ask!*

There has been much said about the “hybrid” approach to concierge medicine, and how it works for a medical practice or a large health group in a practical sense.

We sat down with Cynthia Dunbar, VP Physician Marketing for Concierge Choice Physicians to get an insider perspective on their blended “Hybrid Choice™” program.

By now most people are familiar with the concept of concierge medicine, where patients pay an annual fee to be a part of their doctor’s panel. What makes Concierge Choice Physicians’ Hybrid Choice different?

From a member’s perspective, the Hybrid Choice program from CCP is not different. Like a standard concierge medicine practice, patients who join get more time with their physician, easy-to-secure, conveniently scheduled appointments that start on time. They get easier ways to communicate with their doctor, even when the office is closed, and they get a physician and staff who can support them with specialists and all their health providers. Perhaps most importantly, they get a health coach, someone they know and trust looking out for them to make sure they are staying motivated and making healthy lifestyle choices.

The difference between a regular concierge practice and a Hybrid Choice program exists from the *doctor’s* perspective. With a Hybrid program, the doctor offers concierge care as a service that members can choose to purchase. In the more commonly known full-model concierge practices, membership is not a choice. Patients have to join, or they must transfer to a different doctor.

What happens to the doctor’s traditional patients when he decides to offer a Hybrid Choice concierge practice?

All of the patients are offered the opportunity to join the Hybrid Choice program, but the program is limited so that the doctor can continue to see traditional patients, and also offer the heightened practice experience to the concierge members. The patients who don’t join simply remain traditional patients, as before. They aren’t dismissed—that’s the most important distinction.



Cynthia Dunbar, VP Physician Marketing
Concierge Choice Physicians

That sounds extremely difficult. How can a busy practice possibly find time to do both concierge medicine and see traditional patients?

That is a common concern we hear from physicians who are already feeling stretched. However, the program is structured so that it can fit even a busy practice’s schedule. First, membership in the program is strictly limited. A careful analysis of the practice and patient demographics is conducted so the physician will have a clear sense of what can be handled comfortably. Typically, only between 3% and 8% of a patient base will join the concierge program, so it really only requires a few hours a week. And when members aren’t scheduled during those hours, it’s a great opportunity for a physician to steal a few moments to do follow-up work with a traditional patient. That kind of time can be so hard to come by, and a Hybrid Choice program bakes it into the weekly schedule, without the financial hit.

If only 3-8% of patients join, is it even worth the effort? How much could such a small program generate in terms of income?

That is always the most surprising factor about hybrid concierge medicine. Let me share some statistics so you can get a sense of it. Let’s imagine a typical primary care practice with 1,800 patients. Let’s assume just 5% of the patients join, and the membership fee is \$2k annually. That means 90 patients join, and they pay \$2k each, generating an extra \$180k in membership revenue. And those statistics are typical of an average Hybrid Choice program.

That IS significant revenue!

Yes! Doctors are often nervous when they embark on the membership medicine path. They are worried it won't pay off, or their patients will be upset. Their reaction after receiving their first check changes everything.

Think about it—even if a doctor ends up with a small program, perhaps that means only 3% of his 1,800 patients join—just 54 patients. At \$2k per member, that still generates an extra \$108k per year. We've had physicians with small programs say "I am so grateful for my program—it paid for my kids' college." Or, my favorite, "that's the down payment on that cottage I want, down by the lake."

Some competitors say the Hybrid Choice approach doesn't work. What do you say to them?

What I would say is that for more than 17 years now, CCP has championed this blended approach to concierge medicine. If it doesn't work, how have we been in business so long and why is our client list growing every year? Our membership has doubled just in the last five years, in fact.

Because our model is flexible and can be scaled up or down, we have been able to expand into markets traditional concierge medicine can't touch, like in specialty practices, especially cardiology, endocrinology and rheumatology, and we've been able to work with doctors in small practices that get passed over by full model concierge companies. We work with doctors in rural and urban markets, and now we are making substantial headway into large health systems and physician groups. They understand how our program can work as an optional service patients can choose.

What about skeptical doctors?

As for the doctors, they should hear it from our clients themselves. One of our clients, Dr. Mattai in California, said it best when she was interviewed by Medical Economics. She was amazed at how many of her patients were craving something like this. And it wasn't the demanding patients that she feared would take over, it was patients who valued her time, wanted more support, and especially patients who wanted convenience above all.

Another client, a cardiologist named Sandy Friedman, MD in New York City, worried that patients wouldn't join, and when the response was so overwhelmingly positive, he said it was "an unexpected validation of my life's work." His program was so successful, and his waiting list grew so long, we ended up helping him convert to a full model concierge program. It has extended his career and allowed him to practice the kind of highly personalized, patient-focused medicine that he is so good at and really loves.

So, what's the first step a doctor or a health system should take to explore this form of concierge medicine?

The first step is to simply call us for a chat about the practice or the health system, and the goals. Every physician has a different goal and it's important we understand that upfront.

Some doctors who are approaching retirement want to continue practicing, but slow down their pace. Other doctors are extremely revenue-focused and need to generate. Many health groups are using hybrid concierge as a recruitment tool to attract high-quality talent, or as a way to boost satisfaction for existing physicians in the network. So, first we listen.

Then we research. We are a data-driven company that uses proprietary software to accurately predict results and make decision-making easier. Our clients get a comprehensive analysis of their options, and then we go from there.

It's important to mention there is no charge and no obligation for any of this.

If you had one piece of advice for a physician, a specialist or a health system, what would it be?

I would reiterate that there is no obligation and no charge to get the research in order to understand your options. There is no risk, so there is no reason not to reach out and try.

CCP is well known in the industry for our physician-friendly reputation. We will not force you into any scenario you aren't comfortable with. We've worked with physicians who got started and stopped, and then a year later, started again and ended up with extremely successful programs. You will control the pace.

We understand you may be concerned about being pressured to upend your practice, particularly when you are already under so much pressure. That won't happen. It's not the nature of the Hybrid Choice model. Your business structure will remain the same.

Don't be afraid to reach out, and there is no better time than now. The pandemic has really made patients value their relationship with their physician more than ever. This is the best time to make the call.

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