

'Back to the Future' of Medicine

No one would doubt that a major overhaul to our health care system is looming. With rises in health care premiums predicted to continue, individuals are often electing to carry higher and higher deductibles and are commonly scaling down their insurance coverage to help with only the most major medical expenses. This often means they simply stay away from the doctor, according to Dr. James Wharton, founder and director of VIP Dermatology.

Many patients perceive the out-of-pocket costs of dermatological care to be too high, so they choose to ignore skin problems, hoping they will go away on their own, Dr. Wharton said. With cases of melanoma on the rise, this could be a fatal mistake.

"I recently saw two cases of malignant melanoma at a free mobile skin cancer screening. In both cases, the individuals did not have insurance, knew they had a spot that needed to be checked but were delaying coming to the doctor because of the cost," said Dr. Wharton. "We saw both of them in VIP Dermatology and were able to provide affordable, life-saving care."

VIP Dermatology and the Aesthetics Center of Louisville are offering a new model of health care, one Dr. Wharton hopes will help stop the unfortunate trend of avoiding the doctor.

"To keep ahead of the changing health care market, we've created a new, innovative model that serves patients on their own terms," he said. "We're placing the emphasis on the doctor-patient relationship."

VIP Dermatology is a separate business that grew out of Dr. Wharton's traditional dermatology practice last year. Initially opened as a private-pay, concierge practice focusing on cosmetic procedures such as Botox injections, fillers, hair removal, laser procedures, photorejuvenation and chemical peels, Dr. Wharton quickly recognized the need for a practice that could adapt with a health care environment that is both unpredictable and always changing.



The concierge concept is not new. Traditionally reserved for affluent patrons who pay outside their insurance coverage, the new concept includes anyone who the model may benefit. This now includes relatively healthy individuals with high deductibles as an emerging, underserved segment of the population. Services are offered as needed with no large upfront fees or retainers.

Insurance carriers often have rules that unknowingly influence the costs and ways in which a person is cared for, according to Dr. Wharton. "The cost of running a business is often higher because of the infrastructure required to deal with insurance claims processing. I think it can be done differently, and better. VIP Dermatology is able to operate more efficiently, thereby reducing costs. So we're not just for the wealthy patient; our services are accessible to anyone."

Simplifying the doctor-patient relationship allows the providers at VIP Dermatology more freedom to treat patients on their terms, and to spend as much time with them as they see fit.

Medical procedures offered at the practice are the same as those offered in a traditional, insurance-based practice, with the focus being on the doctor-patient relationship. Medical procedures include treatments for all types of skin conditions, including eczema, acne and skin cancers. Dr. Wharton maintains his current insurance-based practice for patients for whom that model works best.

Dr. Wharton believes that his new model of offering a traditional insurance-based practice along with a concierge service gives patients multiple options to suit their needs and will become more common in the future.

"As physicians uniquely qualified to treat any skin problem, dermatologists are at the forefront of the latest skin-related medical advancements. At the Aesthetics Center and VIP Dermatology, we're also taking a step back to the basics of efficient, quality, patient-focused care. Let us take you 'back to the future' of medicine."

Aesthetics Center
of LOUISVILLE

13802 Lake Point Circle Suite 201
Louisville, KY 40223
502-855-6200
<http://www.aestheticscenter.org>