

New app offers no-wait doctors' appointments—but it'll cost you \$3,000

May 28 2018, by David Reich-Hale, Newsday



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A California company has developed an app that could give Long Island clients a "fast pass" in doctors' waiting rooms, while a Manhattan firm plans to provide members with no-wait emergency room service on the

East End this summer.

The two are new examples of "concierge medicine," a model in which members pay an annual fee for special access to doctors.

Concierge Key Health subscribers can use the company's mobile app to schedule no-wait appointments with participating doctors. The Newport Beach, California-based firm launched in pockets of the West Coast, including the Los Angeles area, earlier this year, and has recently entered the New York market.

"We plan to be in the tri-state area in the next couple months," CEO Robert Grant said. "We are going through the process of signing up doctors in the New York area, and that includes Long Island."

Priority Private Care, which offers concierge emergency room care 24 hours a day every day at its location in Manhattan, plans to roll out an East End-based service for the summer months, co-founder Benjamin Kruger said.

Concierge Key Health puts a focus on specialty practices such as cardiology, ophthalmology, ear/nose/throat, dermatology, orthopedics and plastic surgery. An individual membership costs \$3,000 annually, while a family subscription, which covers up to three children under age 26, is \$5,000. Members also pay regular appointment fees when they see a doctor.

The company has about 600 members, Grant said.

"We did some promotional sign ups, and we expect many of them to convert and become paying members," he said. "We also have plenty of paying subscribers. We are also eyeing corporate accounts."

The doctors are selected via a peer-to-peer vetting process, Grant said. He added that doctors are recommended to clients based on their insurance benefits and location, although members can make changes to those recommendations.

About 200 doctors have joined the network nationwide, including about 20 in New York. So far only one of those, Dr. Stephen Greenberg, is on Long Island. The plastic surgeon is based in Woodbury, with additional offices in Southampton and Boca Raton, Florida.

"This makes it so easy for a busy professional who doesn't have time or energy to wait for an appointment," Greenberg said.

He said he has set aside time in his schedule for Concierge Key Health patients, so other patients aren't skipped in the waiting room.

The concierge medicine model has grown on Long Island and nationwide over the last few years, although the industry has focused more on general practitioners who bill patients directly for membership. Annual membership fees range from \$1,100 to \$3,600, doctors said. Usually, members also pay appointment fees.

The physicians cap the number of patients they accept at about 600, which is about 75 percent less than at standard general practitioner practices. But the doctors are guaranteed a minimum income from each of those patients. Some concierge doctors take insurance, while others don't.

The concierge model remains a sliver of the physician industry.

There are about 900,000 licensed physicians in the United States, and while there is no database of concierge doctors, experts have estimated there are about 5,000 to 8,000 such doctors.

While most of concierge medicine remains primary care, other types of businesses are also breaking into the model, said Priority Private Care's Kruger.

The company has ER physicians, full diagnostic imaging and labs available with no wait for members at its Upper East Side location.

"People come to us for urgent issues, potentially immediate issues that may not be truly life-threatening, and for convenient general care," Kruger said. "That includes the more basic medical services that may not be convenient for them to get in their everyday life. For instance, they forgot to get a flu shot, or their kid is vomiting in the middle of the night.

"We don't take gunshot wounds or trauma."

Priority Private Care launched in 2016 and has 1,200 members, he said. An individual membership costs \$5,000, while a family package costs about \$10,000 for a family of four.

"That includes visits to a medical facility, and it covers your lab work," Kruger said.

Diagnostic imaging and some other services are not covered in the annual membership.

With the planned East End service, "people can join for the summer at a lower rate, or they can roll it into a full membership," Kruger said.

FAST FACTS:

Concierge Key Health

Service: No-wait appointments with specialty [doctors](#)

Annual fee: \$3,000 individual, \$5,000 family

Priority Private Care

Service: No-wait, 24-hour emergency room care

Annual fee: \$5,000 individual, \$10,000 family

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Citation: New app offers no-wait doctors' appointments—but it'll cost you \$3,000 (2018, May 28) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-05-app-no-wait-doctors-appointmentsbut-itll.html>

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