



BEACH CITIES MEDICINE

PERSONALIZED MEDICAL CARE

A Dream Deferred

As I was about to press "submit" for my applications to orthopedic surgery residency programs, I was struck with the realization that what I loved about medicine was not the operating room, but the patients themselves. I enjoyed the procedures, but I couldn't wait to see how my patients were doing in clinic and getting to know them better. This late-game realization directed my path into a family medicine and sports medicine hybrid, where I could get to know my patients over the course of many years and still hone my musculoskeletal expertise through a sports medicine fellowship.

During my sports fellowship, I was also moonlighting in a local urgent care to establish myself in the community, planning on hanging my own shingle. But in 2004, an opportunity opened up for me to join the premiere primary care group in the area. The rest, as they say, is history. Over the next decade, I had great partners in private practice in Torrance, and subsequently joined Torrance Memorial's newly founded Physician Network in about 2013. Shortly thereafter, I established our new office across the street from my kids' school in Hermosa Beach.

On the sports medicine side of things, I've also been fortunate enough to be able to work for the last 15-20 years as a team physician with teams like the Los Angeles Dodgers, the LA Galaxy, and several others. We are appreciative of countless priceless memories along the journey. I've also been able to maintain a very small concierge practice for the last ten years, which we have used philanthropically to fund charities around the world to the tune of over a half a million dollars. To say that I've been absurdly blessed in my work is an understatement - and I do not take it for granted.

And yet the pace of volume-based medical care is one that I can no longer sustain with the quality that I want to provide. The 12-15 hour days I have always worked are taking a toll on my health and family, and I recognize keep me from being at my very best for patients. As my patients age and get more complex, well - I'm not getting any younger either and I need to build the next chapter of my career for success as well. So I've taken time to reflect on what "success" really means. And I've decided that it doesn't have to do with volume. The very thing that attracted me to primary care and away from a more lucrative surgical field - the doctor-patient relationship - is too often compromised in high-volume arrangements. I don't have the time to research medical problems in the depth I would like to do. I am unable to communicate with specialists the way that I'd want to if it were my own parent I was caring for. I often run late with my patients because I take the time to really listen, understand, and thoughtfully explain things with my last patient - only to frustrate the next person waiting for me. And the only one more frustrated that I'm running behind is me. Both sides of the doctor-patient relationship are less than what they should be. I cannot work harder. But I know I can do better.

For the last 8-9 years, I've focused on building a new office - building up physicians and staff alike to provide the best quality care that we possibly can in the insurance-based model that we operate under. And I'm very proud of what we've done--topping the charts in our indicators of both quality and volume of patient care. However, the inherent struggles - whether from telephones, staffing, or simply not having enough of myself to go around - still plague me. And while I don't prefer the term "concierge" (I'm not making

dinner reservations, I'm a physician...), I am really excited about the idea to provide better care, albeit to fewer people. I need to be stretched less thin to do my absolute best for the patients who value me as their lead physician.

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When I was moonlighting 18 years ago, planning to hang my own shingle and open a solo private practice allowing me to stay on my academic A-game, I bought the domain name www.beachcitiesmedicine.com. I've maintained that website for all these years with just a PO Box address and a baby picture of my first child (who is now a student at UCLA), holding onto the idea that one of these days, I'd build my idealized medical practice. A generation and a pandemic later, I do believe the time has come for a dream deferred as I launch my own practice at Beach Cities Medicine.

While I'm still working out the details of office space and insurance contracts, my plan is to have a small office space with an excellent staff who knows you intimately, right here in the Beach Cities. I plan to accept Medicare and most PPO insurance contracts. I will have an annual membership fee to allow me to provide same-or next-day appointments for you, have all your appointments be twice as long as in my current model, and be on call for you personally whenever you need me. I'm excited about fulfilling this dream that I've deferred for the better part of the last two decades so that I can continue to refocus on that once-sacred doctor-patient relationship for the decade(s) ahead.

And here's the bittersweet part. I know that this model is not for everyone. By design, it cannot be for everyone, or even most of my patients, or it would be self-defeating as I'd be stretched too thin once again. I will thus no longer be able to serve most of you with whom I've built relationships I've genuinely enjoyed and kept me going all those long hours for so many years. I anticipate that I'll be able to take on less than 25% of my existing patient panel in my new model, and after that, I'll have to form a waiting list for prospective members.

For those of you who would be interested in joining me, you can find more information on becoming a patient at www.beachcitiesmedicine.com, or email my enrollment team at info@beachcitiesmedicine.com. While my team can reply to questions beforehand, I plan to start accepting new patients in the order I receive their completed new patient enrollment forms on January 1, 2022 until my enrollment capacity is reached. For those of you who are not able or interested in following me, please know that my office notes are far more thorough than most, and the many other physicians in the Torrance Memorial Physician Network will have access to them and be able to see where we left off as you re-establish your care with someone new.

For the thousands of patients who have made this journey possible, thank you. For the amazing colleagues who have taught me and helped manage patients with me, thank you. For all those people who I look forward to seeing such that my long workdays truly just feel like I'm working with and taking care of good friends – thank you. Thank you for making the first half of my career so fulfilling and rewarding. It has truly been the adventure of a lifetime and a career I'd never dreamed would be this good. But I have always dreamt big, and it's time for me to begin the next chapter. For those who come with me, I know we can do even better, together.

Thank you for the memories,



Dave
(aka David H. Wallis, MD)