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NEWS

More doctors embracing Direct Primary Care

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CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — More doctors are choosing to not accept insurance and instead charge monthly fees. It's called Direct Primary Care and many patients, like Chuck Gulat have already made the switch.

The Charlottesville resident said he is no longer rushed when he sees his primary care doctor. He comes as often as he wants and doesn't need insurance to pay for it.

"Sounds almost too good to be true?" said CBS News correspondent Kenneth Craig.

"I'm living it and it seems too good to be true."

Gulat pays $60 a month to see his primary physician, Dr. Maura McLaughlin. Her practice is just one of the nearly 700 practices embracing the new trend across the nation. The membership fee include unlimited visits and urgent care if

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Some employers are giving employees the option of joining direct primary care practices to help reduce their health care costs. Laws have been passed in 23 regulating Direct Primary Care.

"The model itself works sort of like Netflix. They can use the services here as often as they need to," said Dr. McLaughlin.

Patients are still encouraged to carry a lower cost insurance plan to cover medical emergencies.

For Dr. McLaughlin, she can spend more time with patients and less time tied up in medical red tape.

"I think the part that gets physicians burned out is clicking boxes on the computer instead of looking at the patient," she said.

But critics, like Dr. Ed Weisbart, are concerned the shortage of primary care doctors will grow, since these doctors see fewer patients. Also, high deductible plans leave specialists uncovered.

"That opens the door to this huge range of medical problems, that fall in-between the catastrophe and primary care."

But for Gulat, having the membership has made all the difference.

"Hands down, it's made me physically healthier, and financially healthier," he told CBS News.

He's now saving about $1,300 a year.

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