

## Q&A with Dr. Robert Blakeburn

For a retainer, he'll give patients more time



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Clinton doctor makes change

to give patients more time

#### **Q: Why did you convert your primary care practice in Clinton to a concierge model?**

**A:** As medicine changes, it is becoming necessary to see a large volume of patients just to keep the doors open and the staff paid. That means that each patient will be getting 5 to 7 minutes of time with the physician. The end result is ineffective and expensive care. Doctors tend to order more tests to make the diagnosis and treatments are less precise. The patients will leave without answers because the doctor will only have time for one question. I chose to move to a personalized medical practice because I believe that this model is the best way to treat our patients. The health care system is changing, deteriorating, and I am choosing to make a change that will impact my patients in a positive way. Ultimately, my goal is to help my patients make the next 20 years of their life even more exciting and fulfilling than the last 20.

#### **Q: What will change?**

**A:** Appointments will last as long as the patient needs, typically 30 minutes. Patients will be given same day or next day appointments that start on time. They will have my cell phone number so they can access care when they have an urgent problem. This will allow more time with each patient. They also get an extensive "executive" physical each year. In a nutshell, we will practice whole-person preventive care rather than the more typical reactive treatment of one symptom at a time.

#### **Q: What did this mean for your existing patients?**

**A:** The patients that do not choose this program will be treated by the nurse practitioners in a typical clinic fashion. I will supervise the nurse practitioners. Any patients who are admitted to our hospital in Clinton will be cared for by me.

**Q: Patients pay a \$1,500 annual retainer for your services. Do you still accept insurance plans?**

**A:** This program is only for noncovered services. That means it is above and beyond insurance. We will still bill everyone's insurance like before. I am bound by the insurance and Medicare and Medicaid contracts and therefore charge co-pays, etc.

SUSAN SIMPSON, BUSINESS WRITER



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