

WHY CONCIERGE EYE RETINA CARE?

WHAT PATIENTS NEED TO KNOW



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Ask Dr. Vivian Kim -- 1st ed.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 What is Concierge Medicine?.....	15
Chapter 2 What are the Benefits of Concierge Medicine?.....	27
Chapter 3 How Does My Hybrid Concierge Practice Work?	35
Chapter 4 Who is My Concierge Practice NOT for?	47
Chapter 5 What's Next?.....	51
About the Author	53
From My Concierge Patients	55

Introduction

Welcome to what I sincerely hope is the most truthful, blunt, straightforward, non-sugar-coated book on the subject of the most unusual hybrid concierge model in ophthalmology.

I have written this book as if we were sitting in my office – enjoying a conversation.

A conversation we couldn't have had before July 2022 since, before that date, I could only give you 5 minutes of my time and had to rush to see the next patient. (Even though you had just spent 2 hours waiting for those 5 minutes of my time).

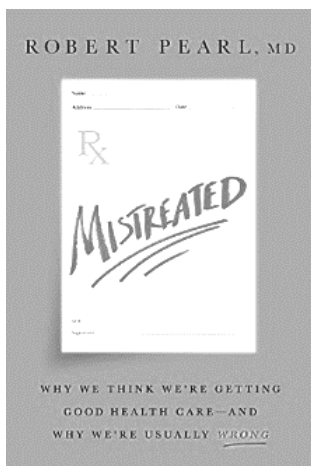
In July 2022, I changed the entire way I practice medicine.

I transitioned to a “Concierge Eye Retina Practice.” Something that, to my knowledge, has never been done in a surgical specialty and sub-specialty practice.

This is because our procedures often are so expensive, they must be covered by insurance, or no one can afford them. The traditional cash-only, non-insurance concierge model wouldn’t work.

But I created a hybrid model (I’ll discuss that in the next chapter).

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Dr. Robert Pearl, an influential thought leader who is a Yale Medical School and Stanford-educated plastic surgeon who ran the Kaiser Foundation, wrote a book about why

we're wrong in thinking we're getting good medical care.

Dr. Pearl's book "**Mistreated**" states Americans "...spend 50% more on medical care than any other country and yet rank seventieth globally in overall health and wellness... we have the best-trained doctors on the planet, and yet their avoidable mistakes kill nearly 200,000 Americans each year."

His conclusions in the book are:

- The American health system is sick.
- Physicians are burnt out and often seriously depressed.
- And as a result, they make mistakes and errors in judgment that result in deaths. (medical errors are the #3 cause of death in the US each year).
- Hundreds of lives could be saved each year if doctors maximized preventative care.

He is right. Our healthcare system has some major issues.

I know there are no easy answers, and I can't change the system. Significant changes on a global level happen slowly and can take over a generation to achieve. I can't change the institution of

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medicine single-handedly, but I can change how I practice medicine in my office to provide better care for my patients.

After searching for a better way, I decided transitioning to a hybrid concierge practice model was the way for me and my patients.

 **5,000
Patients**

Before I became a concierge doctor, I had over 5,000 patients!

I was facing burnout myself.

I was caught up in the “rat race.”

I felt like I was running very fast on a hamster wheel and going in circles.



The patient demand kept growing, and I couldn't keep up with the pace.

I kept telling myself I was up to the challenge of hard work and sacrifice, calling upon the same grit and discipline that got me through the 10 years of doctor training to be the eye retina care specialist and surgeon that I am.

The pace I was forced to work under increased my chances of making mistakes or missing something.

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Patients were becoming just a number.

And I was losing compassion.

**I was beginning to dread
the practice of medicine.**

It had to change.

I wanted to

- take back the *joy* of medicine,
- take back the *practice* of medicine,
- and deliver to my patients the kind of care they deserve and the attention to detail they need.

**I wanted to look at
the patient as an
individual and – not
just a pair of eyes.**

 **July, 2022
Decision Time**

That's why I switched, after 7 years in a traditional solo private practice, to a hybrid concierge model in July 2022.

I'm hoping you'll catch yourself nodding as you read this book, saying to yourself, "This makes sense."

This book is purposely short.

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I call it a 20-minute read.

I wrote it to share with my current and future patients why I chose the hybrid concierge model and the benefits to you as my concierge patient.

A slow transition to the concierge model

I did not take the decision lightly.

It took me months to decide, and then it's taken months to work through the transition, and it's still ongoing.

- My staff had to make the hard calls to tell my patients about the concierge model and that they would now have to pay an annual membership subscription fee.
- Patients didn't understand it at first – and quite honestly, neither did my staff or even other colleagues of mine.

- Communication effectively was hard since I'm not a marketing expert.
- It was a bumpy transition for all of us for a while.
- I shed tears of loss and goodbyes when I had to refer many former patients to other retina specialists.
- And I've had to turn other patients away because I'm limiting the number of patients I now see.

But in the end, it was worth it – for both my current patients and for myself.

MY BIG WHY!

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I care about finally being able to spend the time to really LISTEN to my patients and to get to know them as a person, not just a number.

A patient tearily shared with me that as an elderly patient, she felt invisible and unheard by busy doctors too busy to listen.

I care about being excited about practicing medicine again.

I care about being thoughtful and more connected to my patients once again.

I care about seeing them engaged.

I care about how excited they are about their proactive steps towards better overall health.

**Which is why the transition
has been life-changing for
my patients, my staff
and myself!**

Medicine is fun again.

All I ask is you give me the 20 minutes
it takes to read this book.

Keep an open mind as I share my
thoughts and the journey to my hybrid
concierge model of patient care.

Hopefully, by the end, you'll understand
why I've done what I've done and WHY
it's the best thing for YOU!!

Please feel free to reach out to me if you
have questions.

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I'm thankful to have the time again to take your call or email and be there to answer your questions.

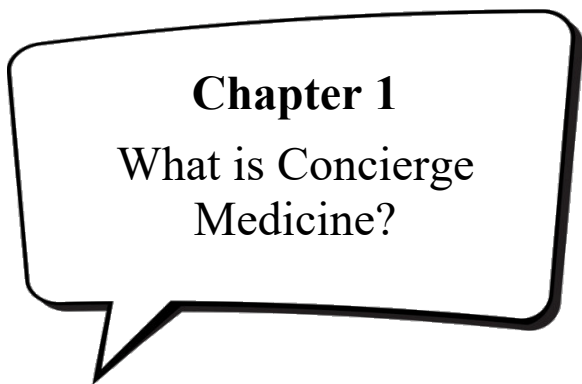


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I should start by first explaining
“concierge” medicine.

What is it?

How did it get started?

The history

The word “concierge” is a French word.

It originates from the Middle Ages in France and means “keeper of the keys.”

Most people think of it in the context of hotels where you have a concierge desk that is there to help guests and make their life easier and more pleasant while they're traveling in unfamiliar locations.

In concierge medicine, it's the same.

It's a model that allows a physician to treat and deliver medical services that are more pleasant and easier for the patient when they're dealing with unfamiliar territory.

It's also more pleasant and easier for the physician (more about why that's important in a minute).

All because they're seeing fewer patients.

And have more time with each one.

Here is the definition as listed in Dictionary.com (both as a noun and an adjective).

Concierge

noun, plural **con·cierges**

[-see-**air**-zhiz; *French* -
syerzh]

(especially in France) a person who has charge of the entrance of a building and is often the owner's representative, doorkeeper.

a member of a hotel staff in charge of special services for guests, as arranging for theater tickets or tours.

an employee stationed in an apartment house lobby who screens visitors, controls operation of elevators, accepts deliveries to the tenants, etc.

adjective

pertaining to or being medical care for which the patient pays the doctor an annual fee for special or extra services: concierge medicine; concierge physicians.



The concierge medicine model started in Seattle in 1996 by two internists, Dr. Howard Maron and Dr. Scott Hall.

At the time, Dr. Maron was the attending physician for the Seattle Supersonics. The players got specialized care and attention from Dr. Maron because he

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didn't have a busy practice with thousands of other patients.

It made practicing medicine a pleasure, and he could give world-class care.

Both Dr. Maron and Dr. Hall knew our current medical system has many flaws – one of which is the number of patients each physician sees and the chance for medical errors because of overwork and burnout.

They wanted to do something different.

Something revolutionary.

Something better for both the patients and the physician.

They decided the answer was to provide high-quality patient care to fewer patients/families (50 patients/families vs. the normal 3,000) by charging a flat monthly membership fee to cover their office overhead and income. Back in

1996, they charged \$13 to \$20 thousand dollars/year per family.

It was a boutique method of delivering patient care. It caught on slowly at first but over the last 20 years (remember what I said previously that it takes a generation to change healthcare traditions) has grown to over 10,000 primary care doctors in the US providing some sort of concierge model of care.



Patients Love The concierge Model

Patients love it because they can see their doctor quickly with very little wait time and have access to them often by email or direct cellphone.

They get personalized care.

They're not just a number to their doctor.

The main criticism has been the fact that some patients cannot afford the annual fee, and therefore, this model has been accused of favoring the wealthy.

This is why a second model soon appeared, which lowered the annual membership fee and still invoiced insurance so the physician could take up to 600 patients but still far fewer than their normal patient load.

The three most common concierge models

Because concierge medicine first started and is typically seen in the primary care space, let's first talk about the three most common concierge medicine business models in primary care.

Variations do exist, but most fall into one of these three.

1. Full Fee-for-Service

Patients pay a retainer under a contractual agreement that might include all services under the primary care umbrella or a set number of visits. This can be an expensive option as traditional insurance is not accepted as payment for the services, so the patient pays everything out of pocket for the care in the office instead of using insurance. But it usually includes 24/7 access to the physician, same-day appointments, and extended time with the doctor.

2. The Hybrid Model

There are two ways this term is used:

The **first** way is that the physicians combine a traditional practice model with a concierge

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model. This means they maintain a roster of patients paying a membership fee for additional non-insurance covered services while still serving a limited number of non-concierge patients. It allows more patients access to the doctor but may limit some of the exclusive benefits of the membership-based concierge practice.

The **second** way hybrid terminology is used: the physician utilizes both the subscription-based membership model while also accepting insurance for medical services provided. The patients get specialized comprehensive wellness plans, 24/7 access to the physician, same-day appointments, and more time spent with the doctor for

enhanced education and services. But the patients are still responsible for paying insurance deductibles, co-pays, and co-insurances dictated by their insurance health plan.

3. Direct Primary Care Model:

Similar to concierge practices, Direct Primary Care (DPC) involves a contractual relationship between patients and providers. The main difference is that DPC tends to focus on a monthly fee for a pre-defined set of primary care services and lab tests and usually at a lower cost than traditional concierge care. This model does not typically include insurance billing. The physician may also negotiate better non-insurance paid services with other providers at a much-reduced fee. Due to the

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absence of insurance hassles, the office can pass on reduced costs and charge less to the patient.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the patient benefits of concierge medicine.

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Chapter 2

What are the Benefits of Concierge Medicine?

It's all starts with TIME – little time waiting and more time with the physician.

With a limited number of patients, concierge doctors can devote more time to each individual, leading to more facetime and more thorough care.

Additionally, patients can enjoy access to their physician via phone, email, or even virtual consultations.

Need a prescription refill or have a pressing health concern? Your concierge doctor is just a call away.



TIME and ATTENTION

Moreover, time and attention take center stage in concierge medicine.

With more time to dedicate to each patient, concierge doctors focus on proactive health management, including personalized wellness plans, comprehensive health screenings, and tailored lifestyle recommendations.

**Time and Attention
lead to better outcomes
by identifying and
addressing health issues
before they escalate.**

Let me give you an example of how time and attention and education from your EYE RETINA doctor can make a difference in your choices to adopt EYE therapies that pay off in the long term.

Did you know there is an FDA-approved injection treatment (since 2017) to treat diabetic retinopathy?

What is diabetic retinopathy? It is vascular damage to the eyes or specifically, the retina, caused by the high sugar levels in diabetes, which can lead to blindness.

This treatment, which are injections, reduce the severity of the changes seen in the damaged eye. Previous to 2017, there was no treatment available that would improve damage to the eyes once it happened. This treatment can now “roll back the clock” per se and give you healthier looking eyes when it comes to blood vessel damage caused by diabetes. It has the potential to keep your vision good for many years and hopefully for the rest of your life.

There are also new treatments for advanced dry macular degeneration since February of 2023 that have never been available before and now can slow down vision loss from advanced disease. These are also injections for the eyes.

And it doesn't stop there...

The perks of concierge medicine extend in and beyond the doctor's office.

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Many concierge practices offer a wide range of conveniences, such as:

- same-day or next-day appointments,
- minimal waiting times,
- streamlined coordination of specialist referrals and diagnostic tests,
- and some even provide house calls for patients unable to travel.

These services ensure that patients receive prompt, attentive, and efficient care.

Now if you're getting injections in your eyes, you want to have a lot of time discussing the ins and outs, possible complications, and explanations from your doctor on how it all works.

You don't want to spend long hours in the office receiving these frequent treatments. And if you have any problems, you want to get in, get seen, and get taken care of immediately.

However, it's important to note that concierge medicine comes with a price tag.



The membership fees can vary significantly depending on the practice and the level of services provided.

While it may not be suitable for everyone due to the associated costs, concierge medicine represents a transformative approach that puts the patient at the center of their healthcare journey.

Concierge medicine is a growing trend for those seeking a more tailored and convenient healthcare experience.

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I don't see this trend stopping anytime soon.

Benefits You Can Expect From Concierge Medicine:

01  Individualized attention and care

02  Respect for your time

03  Focus on preventative medicine

04  Personal relationship with me

05  Longer appointment times

06  Short wait-times

07  Flexible scheduling options

In the next chapter I'm going to talk about how it works in my eye retina care practice.

Chapter 3

How Does My Hybrid Concierge Practice Work?

Hopefully, by now, you have an understanding of:

- what a concierge medical practice is
- what the benefits are
- and why many primary doctors are transitioning to that model.

Did you know that ophthalmology is a surgical specialty? And the same goes for retina care.

**And as far as I know,
there is no surgical
specialty doctor who has a
concierge practice.**

The reason is the high cost of the surgical and other procedural services we provide.

The drugs I use to treat major retinal diseases are injected into the eye.

The drug for each injection can cost as much as \$2,500 per injection, and some patients may require monthly injections in both eyes.

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Charging patients cash for this is not sustainable, so we bill insurance for the drug and administration.

I also charge a membership fee for those patients wanting the benefits of a concierge model.

This allows me to limit my practice to a smaller number so I can spend more time with each patient, reduce wait times, and offer personalized medical advice and treatment.

A membership fee is charged to the patient and not covered by insurance. But the medical services are billed to insurance.

**That's why it's called
a hybrid model.**

**I now slow down and
really enjoy my
patients and focus on
their whole care AND
Eye Retina care.**

For example, if a patient tells me about a problem with their heart, I can advise them on what tests to ask their doctor for or what questions to ask.

Although I am not their primary care physician nor cardiologist, I become a trusted advisor with a medical degree

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who knows more than a layperson about medicine.

This is possible because I have more time to dedicate to each patient and their issues.

One of my long-term patients

I had a conversation recently with a patient who I'd been taking care of for years prior to this transition.

She has macular degeneration.

I realized I had been caring for her for years but knew nothing about her family life.

She had just been a number and a pair of eyes in my practice.

I didn't want it that way, but with over 5,000 patients I had no choice.

But now I do.

Now that I spend more time getting to know more about her, she shared her story about moving from the east coast to Fresno California to be closer to family.

Right after the move, her husband got sick and passed away.

I'm sure her life issues had some impact on her eye disease, its activity and its response to treatment.

For the first time in a long time, I now know more about her and all the patients I treat. I realized what I had missed and was glad I had made the transition.

Another story of how attention made the difference.

Another one of my patients had a history of peripheral neuropathy. For those of you who don't know what that is, it leads

to numbness and tingling in the feet and hands which can cause some loss of coordination and balance especially when it affects the feet.

My patient has macular degeneration. But suddenly between visits to get injections she was wheelchair bound and unable to walk properly. Her doctor told her it was all part of the progression of peripheral neuropathy. I thought the worsening was a bit sudden and didn't seem to fit the picture of typical peripheral neuropathy. I encouraged her and her family to get a second opinion.

Long story short, they discovered a tumor, which required surgery, pressing on the lower part of her spine which was causing the sudden decline in her function.

Now if I had been an over busy doctor rushing from one patient to another, I may not have spent the time to notice this

change and encourage her family to seek another opinion in this neurologic issue not related to the eye issue for which I was caring.

What About Your Eyes?



I now provide wellness eye exams as one of the benefits of my concierge service.

**Wellness
Check**



How is this appointment different than other exams?

Yes, I perform comprehensive exams of your eyes as part of your medically

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necessary care, but your wellness check will go way beyond that.

We'll discuss everything about your eye health, whether it's problematic or not. I'll educate you about basic eye principles involved in normal eye health. It's included in the membership fee, and it's not billed to insurance.

Sometimes when you share other aspects of your life, I may have advice to give you outside my ophthalmology specialty expertise.

I feel the patient-doctor relationship should not just be about the disease and taking care of the one or two problems that you're in my office for.

I have time to review all your relevant medical records.

And I ask questions...lots of questions.

I love to ask questions and I encourage my patients to do the same.

Questions to make you think or rethink about your health issues instead of being on autopilot.

Questions like...

- How did a procedure go?
- How was the surgery you had?
- Any complications?
- How did you get the diagnosis you got?
- What is everything you're taking – including supplements?
- Why are you still on a certain medicine or supplement?

And I do a lot of listening.

I'm now looking at you more holistically and learning how your health got where it is now.

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If you don't know the answer to the questions, then I can encourage you to follow up with your primary care physician to ask the right questions.

I may literally write out the questions, so you remember.

The Result:

**You become a much
more informed and
engaged patient who's
taking charge of your
health.**

I am an educator.

I am an advocate.

I'm an advisor.

Together we will chart a customized path to wellness.

It makes medicine fun again for me and my patients.

Concierge medicine is great for many patients, but there are some people who this model does not work for.

That's the subject in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Who My Concierge Practice is NOT for?

I think concierge medicine is what every patient deserves.

But the realities of medicine and life don't always allow for the concierge delivery method.

Even so, my patients have to see the value of what I'm offering and are willing to prioritize their health.

My hybrid concierge practice is not for those people who DO NOT take their health seriously.

Who aren't ready to accept the daily work that goes into maintaining health or to deal with their health issues.

Who want a quick fix and won't be proactive.

Who are in denial.

Who won't listen to sound medical advice.

Who can't see the value of paying an out-of-pocket fee for the hi-touch individualized care I give them.

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I believe health is actually a team sport, and it's the patient and the doctor(s) and the team around them.



- The primary doctor
- The doctor's staff
- The specialty doctor
- The patient
- The patient's family
- And often, even the patient's friends

Together we are all focused on your health.

For the first time in my practice, I can focus on the proactive and hi-connection side of medicine.

So, we can lead a better quality of life, a life filled with more health and joy.

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Chapter 5

What's Next?

Thank you for reading this short book to understand concierge medicine and why I decided to transform my eye retina practice to one.

Please feel free to reach out to me at 559-702-1212 or drkim@arcretina.com if you have questions.

I'm thankful to have the time again to take your call and be there to answer your questions.

If you're reading this book and not yet my concierge patient, call my office to

DrKim@Arcretina.com

see if I still have any patient openings or to see if we would be a good fit for your best eye and retina care.



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About the Author

Dr. Vivian Kim is a highly skilled and board-certified Ophthalmologist and Retina Specialist and Surgeon with 25 years of experience in the clinical and surgical field. She received her Ivy League training and has extensive knowledge, skill, and expertise in providing medical and surgical treatments for both complex and common retinal diseases.

Dr. Kim recently launched a concierge practice to add a wellness component to her retina practice, providing her patients with expert eye retina care and comprehensive education for their overall well-being. Her approach to patient care is centered around detailed personalized attention and connection.

Dr. Kim is dedicated to providing her patients with the highest level of care and expertise, ensuring they receive the best possible outcomes.

Apart from her medical accomplishments, Dr. Kim is an accomplished concert pianist, ballroom dancer, and photographer passionate about lifelong learning. She loves sharing her insights and knowledge on a wide range of topics that can benefit her patients.

From My Concierge Patients

“I didn’t even have to think twice about it! My optometrist referred me to Dr. Kim because his own wife is seeing Dr. Kim. That recommendation says a lot. My eye doctor entrusted the care of his own family to Dr. Kim!”

Dr. Kim was able to see me the very same day I had a hemorrhage and lost vision. It was very scary. It was very stressful and being able to see her the same day kept me from going through a lot of angst and concern. She was able to put me at ease and I am thankful for her responsiveness.

I know I am going to get quality treatment. I thank Dr. Kim for the high level of service. For those that don’t know her, I want to get the word out!”

Gary N.

“When I attended Dr. Kim’s town hall, I learned how impacted other Dr.’s schedules are. When I see Dr. Kim now, the wait time is non-existent, and she spends more time with her patients.

There is no wait time. I also feel like I have become friends with Dr. Kim and the staff.

It is easy to make or change appointments. I can always get appointments easily. I love this.”

Evelyn F.

“Dr. Kim gives people back a gift from God. With your eyesight you can have your life back. She has given me at least 30 more years of eyesight. Dr. Kim inspires her patients and her staff!”

Glenn S.

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“I enjoy going to see Dr. Kim, she always knows my chart the moment she walks in the room, she looks at me as a whole person; how I feel, how my health is and not just my eyes, I think that’s so great.”

Sheri C.

“I’ve gone to Dr. Kim for four years now, I was a part of the transition to a concierge model, and I love that I now basically get waited on immediately when I step through the door. It moves really quickly and that’s something I prioritize.

My wellness exam was great, It’s a very thorough holistic type of exam. It wasn’t just about my eyes, it was everything.”

Linnea E.

“I love the support staff. Teresa is excellent and I think Dr. Kim really knows how to pick a care team and have everyone in place. They are all very well-trained.

My favorite memory/experience with Dr. Kim is how she gets so excited for me when my eyes are improving and doing better.

Even through the pandemic when I wanted to stay inside the house, she always reassured me it’s going to be okay, to just come in, mask up and come to my appointment. The office is sanitary clean and safe and it’s true, I never got Covid and still got my treatments.”

Michelle S.

“My decision to join has paid off tremendously. The wait time has diminished greatly. The personalized care has been incredible! Dr Kim now has time to talk to me on a professional and personal level, explaining my treatments and the results of them after each session...I am confident I have the best possible treatment for my Macular Degeneration.”

Jimmy S.

“Dr. Kim is so gentle. Having your needles in your eye is always scary, but she doesn't make it as bad. I've been to other doctors. She has been the most gentle, thoughtful. I am so glad she is my doctor.”

Evelyn F.

“For 4 years I used to go to Stanford. The ophthalmologist there would give me injections every 4 weeks, it was at least a 6-hour day for me. Since I have gone to Dr. Kim for a little over a year, she has extended my visits to every 14 weeks.

She questioned whether I was getting the correct treatment for macular degeneration. She was able to find what the issue was, and my vision is better. On the first 2 visits she treated me in the same manner as Stanford.”

Richard N.

“I feel valued and appreciated. When I show up for an appointment I’m taken in and things are done for me quite quickly rather than having to wait 1 to 2 hours.”

Steve B.

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“I joined concierge because I wanted to keep Dr. Kim as my eye doctor! I like the way she gives me my shots. I like the way she talks to me. I am in and out before I would ever get seen in any other office!”

Gary B

“Dr. Kim can spend more time and explain things in more depth, more relaxed... I rave about her all the time... I feel blessed I am in a good place... I can count on being seen and know I will be taken care of.”

Shirley S.

“I joined the concierge practice because I have total trust in Dr. Kim. There is virtually no wait time. I went to another practice and had to wait for hours!”

Glenna M.

“I heard that she’s the best...I like the way she talks to me. Time is taken to sit and talk and get educated. I learned about the new advanced dry macular degeneration drug. Since the change there are not a dozen people in the waiting room...I get brought back within minutes. I hate sitting and waiting in the waiting room. I need a driver when I am dilated, and my daughter can bring me and still get to work on time.”

Teresa S.

“I liked the wellness exam and was fascinated to learn how the eye works. I had no idea! I definitely appreciated learning what can happen with eye issues.”

Irene R.