



## Wealth Planning Report

# Managing Your Health in a Covid-Impacted World

Regardless of how Covid-19 has affected your family's health, chances are that it has made a difference in the health care you receive and are able to access.

We asked Dan Carlin, M.D., CEO and founder of concierge telemedical practice WorldClinic, for some of the biggest health care-related lessons that he thinks will come out of pandemic shutdowns and the implications for all of us going forward.

### Covid's lasting effect on health care delivery and access

When Covid first hit, and then resurged, many medical offices and primary care facilities across the country were essentially closed to anyone not infected with the virus. Routine checkup visits, preventive care treatments and elective procedures were pushed off. This also included dental visits for many. Maybe you had to delay some test or procedure during the past year and a half—or you felt uncomfortable being in a doctor's office, clinic or emergency room during the worst periods of Covid outbreaks.

If you think such delays are a thing of the past, think again, says Carlin, who believes we may never fully return to "normal" health care delivery again. "We don't need a pandemic for the system to become unavailable to you," he says. Two key reasons why:

- **Fewer physicians.** Many health care professionals—including highly experienced physicians—decided to leave the industry entirely in the wake of Covid, many taking retirement early, due in part to the workload and stress they experienced trying to care for so many patients as the virus surged and surged again.
- **The wave of aging baby boomers.** The demand side of health care is ramping up like never before. Baby boomers will need more and more health care as they age into their 70s and beyond—and likely live longer

than past generations. Additionally, medical advances will create greater demand for elective procedures—just when there will be fewer doctors to perform them. Perhaps most troubling: The sheer size of the boomer demographic (72 million) will likely create significant problems in terms of access to care. With so many older Americans needing so much health care, Medicare will be strained—likely resulting in waiting lists, denials for service and health care that doesn't measure up to previous levels of quality.

As Carlin puts it: "Covid is a shock to the system—a hurricane. But hurricanes end. The boomers will be a systematic strain on the system for decades—like a drought that seems to never end."

### TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR CARE

Carlin's message: It's time for individuals to take charge of not just their health but also their health care, rather than assume that the health care system will be an easy-to-tap resource in the years ahead as medicine is increasingly socialized. That can be much easier said than done in a health care model that benefits from keeping patients in a state of sickness to increase profits as reimbursements reduce.

The good news: There are workarounds that can help you become a more powerful advocate for yourself as a recipient of health care services and improve your health at the same time. Some action steps to consider:

1. **Embrace telehealth.** Telemedicine and remote care often became vitally important for patients throughout the pandemic when many physical locations were closed. Patients and providers exchange information through online video chats, emails and phone calls. In its most advanced form, telemedicine allows doctors to monitor their patients' health and vitals remotely using advanced technology. This approach is designed to help make health care access easier and faster.

**2. Consider concierge practices.** Essentially, concierge medicine is a membership model: For a fee—concierge practices don't accept insurance in most cases—you get access to medical practices with relatively small ratios of patients to physicians. The results can include shorter wait times, longer visits and significantly more personalized care. It also means that care may be far less likely to be denied or watered down in the name of profitability.

**3. Manage your own health risks.** In an overburdened, understaffed health care environment, Carlin recommends becoming your own primary care provider as much as possible. This means being responsible for making better health-related decisions and working with providers to track key metrics that can help you get a more personalized picture of your health risks.

The obvious key metrics and procedures are those you can track and manage largely by yourself—including your weight, the number of steps you take each day, your blood pressure, home breast exams, sleep habits and so on. Work with a provider to use special devices to track how these and similar metrics change over time. These

should include foundational tests and screenings that should be done regularly (such as blood pressure, HDL cholesterol, mammograms and fasting blood sugar).

Also focus on data and tests that are especially important to you. Thanks to the ability to map the human genome as well as a better ability to identify ancestors' ailments, it's easier than ever to determine your most pertinent health risks. Armed with that information, you can set out to track the specific metrics that matter most in your own life. Say, for example, your family history reveals that the men tend to die from heart disease in their 70s. You might work with your provider to do regular targeted cardiac screenings such as a high-sensitivity CRP test (a blood test that reveals how much plaque you have throughout your vascular system).

Ultimately, the look and delivery of health care may be significantly different in the years to come with new and more advanced technologies. By preparing yourself today, you can better navigate that transition—and put yourself in the best possible position to get the care you want when you need it most.

This is an executive summary of our wealth management ebook. For a complimentary copy of our complete report, please contact us.



**P**aul Byron Hill, MBA, MFP, MSFS, ChFC®, RICP®, CFP® is a nationally recognized Wealth Management Certified Professional™ and Certified Financial Planner™ professional, written about in *Fortune*, *Forbes*, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, and *Money*. As co-author of *Retire Abundantly*, Paul was interviewed by James Malinchak, of ABC-TV's hit series, *Secret Millionaire*. Reuters AdvisePoint recognized Mr. Hill as one of 500 "Top Advisers" in the U.S. and has featured him on their website.

Paul founded Professional Financial Strategies, Inc. as one of the first fiduciary planning firms in 1993 that now specializes in retirement and wealth management for affluent and aspiring families. Paul is a personal chief financial officer who acts in the best interest of clients. He brings together a distinctive management process and a network of specialists for making informed decisions for structured investing, secure income, mitigating taxes, protecting assets, and preserving wealth for family and purposeful causes.

Mr. Hill received a BA with distinction from the University of Rochester and later an MBA in finance from its Simon School of Business. He earned an MS in financial services from The American College along with his Chartered Financial Consultant and Retirement Income Certified Professional designations, and then received an MS in financial planning from the College for Financial Planning (now at the University of Phoenix). The College for Financial Planning appointed him as adjunct faculty, and he has taught at St. John Fisher College. Who's Who presented Paul with the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award, the Humanitarian Award, and featured him with others in *The Wall Street Journal* and other publications.

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