

# When Health Insurance Limits Health Care

## One Physician's Story of Transformation

BY PATTIE CINELLI

The business of health care continues to undergo dramatic changes. Acronyms such as PPO and HMO have become household words in the past 20 years. Prevention and cause of illness is often ignored in place of quick fixes from the latest pharmaceuticals. Office visits are short, prescription pads are in abundance, and doctors are often financially rewarded for seeing more patients and doing less tests. Movies like "Sicko," produced by Michael Moore, show the dark side of health care in this country.

Capitol Hill physician Wanda Dyson is just one of many doctors struggling to practice medicine in this environment. A survey by the Center for Studying Health System Change found a marked decrease in the percentage of physicians in solo or two-doctor practices (about 8 percent in 2004 and 2005) according to the American Medical News, Sept. 10.

Physicians in private practice are sick of worrying about malpractice, fighting for reimbursement and being coerced into practicing cookie-cutter medicine. The cost of being a physician in solo practice is becoming hazardous to their health and well being.

Dyson has been forced to become creative in order to stay in a profession she loves. Last month, Dyson told her patients she would no longer take health insurance. John Pittman, 70, a patient of Dyson's for more than a decade, started to cry when she told him. "We've become good friends. But my



Dr. Wanda Dyson, practicing medicine on Capitol Hill since 1996.

insurance hadn't paid her in months. I understand if you don't get paid you can't keep working. But I don't have the money to pay her myself."

Patricia Smith, a patient for about five years, is lucky she doesn't have to find a new doctor. "I will continue with her for right now. She's caring. No one wants to leave her."

Dyson wanted to be a doctor since her first day of kindergarten. "I think it was destiny." From the time she was 2, she played with medical equipment found in her family's house, left behind by the previous homeowner, a physician.

It took her years to complete her medical degree. The usual 11 years of college, medical school and residency stretched into many more. With children and a family, her schooling took several stops and starts. But she never strayed from her calling and finally became a doctor of internal medicine in 1987.

Dyson worked in medically underserved areas of Washington, DC, before coming to Capitol Hill in 1996 where she joined a hospital-supported practice that paid her overhead and salary.

She discovered that many of her patients with hypertension and diabetes were obese. "I wanted to make a difference in their health." She could empathize with her patients because she, too, had become obese after the birth of her last child. After more study, and after she returned to her pre-pregnancy weight, she created a private medical practice specializing in bariatrics and internal medicine.

Dyson "gave it her all," even getting a personal training certification so she could advise her pa-

tients on proper exercise. She helped many, enabling some to lose more than 100 pounds, but the more she worked with obese patients the more obvious it became that "there was more to obesity than just a poor diet and lack of exercise."

Even though she was seeing patients and doing her job well, her reality changed once she was on her own. "I saw early on how dependent we are on the health insurance companies for our survival." When one company changed hands, the reimbursement was about one half what it was before the change a month before. Other payments were denied after services were rendered. "I realized I wasn't in control of my destiny. I also realized I had to do other things if I wanted to stay in medicine."

In 2004 Dyson took advantage of an offer from a friend to study mesotherapy – a nonsurgical cosmetic medicine treatment to reduce fat – from a French physician who had trained with the founder of the technique. At the same time, she certified in the use of Botox and fillers and added aesthetics to her practice.

During that period, five of her friends were diagnosed with breast cancer. Her two closest friends underwent biopsies and treatment at the same time. Both initially said they would not undergo traditional/conventional treatment but had no knowledge of what alternative medicine had to offer. She took it upon herself to find out.

She attended a conference given by the American Association for the Advancement of Medicine titled "Menopause, Andropause, Power in Transition." "It was a mind-blowing experience. I couldn't

believe what was already known about the disease process of breast cancer as well as alternative treatments. I had never heard of any of it. My life as a physician was changed forever.”

She thinks it was divine intervention. She began asking the “why” question instead of the conventional model of treating the symptom with a drug. “What is happening inside to create the disease state?” What I came to realize with one of my friends who passed on was what was blocking her to heal was her emotional state. I realized too late. Now I see more the connectedness of everything.”

Dyson decided to merge all parts of her. She created the motto “Inner Health Outer Beauty.” She shifted her practice. The last great thrust for her was the health insurance fiasco. However, she said she probably would have never made these changes in her life without the catalyst. After attempts with several different billing services and a prod from her husband, who was not happy subsidizing her practice with equity from their home, she had to give it up. “Patients feel abandoned and deserted by me. Some are mad. They don’t understand. It’s like saying goodbye to family members. That’s hard.”

Dyson is not alone. Doctors have called her inquiring how she made the transition. One no longer delivers babies and is now performing liposuction treatments. Another has set up an aesthetics practice in his home. Others are using their surgical skills to work in MediSpas so they can remain physicians. Dyson says she is grateful for finding a different path that allows her to use her physician training.

To contact Dr. Dyson, call 202-575-4660 or log onto her Web site at [www.cflwellness.com](http://www.cflwellness.com).

*Pattie Cinelli has been writing her health/fitness column for eight years. If you have a topic you'd like her to cover, please contact her at: [fitness@pattiecinelli.com](mailto:fitness@pattiecinelli.com). ■*

## MEXELIN DIABETES TRIAL

Metformin-Exenatide-Insulin

### *Is Type 2 Diabetes a Part of Your Life?*

If you have Type 2 diabetes, you may be eligible to participate in a research study using medications already approved by the FDA for the treatment of Type 2 diabetes.

#### **You may qualify for this study if you:**

- ★ Have Type 2 diabetes and are between 30-70 years of age
- ★ Take at least 1000 mg Metformin (glucophage) per day
- ★ In addition to Metformin, take one other oral anti-diabetes medicine OR no more than one dose of insulin daily
- ★ Have been told your blood sugar is too high (A1c between 7-10)

If you qualify, you will receive study-related care and study medication at no charge. To learn more about this study, please visit our website and follow the links for participating in clinical trials OR please call:

#### **MedStar Clinical Research Center on Capitol Hill**

[medstarresearch.org](http://medstarresearch.org)

202-787-5373



#### **Warm Spirit Wellness Creates Wealth**

Superior botanical products to pamper your beauty and health needs



*The heart and soul of Warm Spirit is to empower people to care for themselves and to nurture their potential within*

**WARM SPIRIT**

**Roz Holmes**  
Emerald Manager #11463  
202-548-0080  
[rozholmes@hotmail.com](mailto:rozholmes@hotmail.com)  
[www.warmspirit.org/msroz](http://www.warmspirit.org/msroz)

#### *New Life Wellness Center*

**Martina Washington**  
Colon Hydrotherapist

Colon Hydrotherapy & Aqua Chi Detox System

426 8th Street, SE 2nd Floor  
Washington, DC 20003  
202.544.9595 Ph 202.544.1357 Fx  
E-mail: [carmelvoice@aol.com](mailto:carmelvoice@aol.com)  
[www.newlifewellnesscenter.com](http://www.newlifewellnesscenter.com)

