

It is difficult to get Suboxone, because so few doctors are certified, and there is often a waiting list. Schleider is in demand -- he estimates 10 percent of his practice is now Suboxone treatment, a way for genteel drug addicts to avoid dingy, depressing methadone clinics.

More than half of Americans polled are unhappy with the traditional health-care system. Convenience-call patients such as Harrison say they wait too long to see conventional physicians, and then doctors hustle them in and out to see the next one. Health plans often do not provide for a family doctor who can liaise among specialists. Tests are not ordered, or ordered without cause. A practice such as Schleider's seems like a stopgap answer.

"My vision was for a regular family health clinic," said Schleider later, back in the car, heading to the Bronx. "That was my ideal, rather than hustling around. But this is the business."

He sees perhaps six patients a day. His practice grosses \$25,000 a month, he says, with 20 percent overhead costs. And that is after less than two years and including rent on a Park Avenue office.

His accessories are mostly old-fashioned; his black bag contains probes and scopes and meters. In his downtown studio apartment, a cabinet contains a supply of medications, since a person who pays for a bedside doctor does not take a taxi into the night to find a pharmacy: Vicodin and Tramadol, Hydrocodone and Acetamin. But he looks up diagnoses and prescriptions on his phone and keeps patient records on his laptop.

Once, Schleider got a call from a woman in her 70s who was short of breath. Within 30 minutes, a radiology technician with an SUV full of equipment had arrived at her building, carried his 100-pound X-ray machine into her apartment, taken chest X-rays and e-mailed results to a lab. Schleider knew the results before he arrived at her side.

Yet some say the house-call visit shows the inequities of the health-care system and of New York City. A two-tiered health-care system is already in place, said Jeremy Boal, the executive director of the Mount Sinai Visiting Doctors Program, one of the largest in the country to do house calls for the homebound elderly who might not otherwise get to a doctor.

He said a house call can deliver the kind of careful attention that every patient deserves. "Until our society chooses a system that's more equal and fair, anything that gets care to patients is a positive," he said.

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