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## Bruce Covner, MD, Makes Patient Care His Top Priority Four Times Over



Bruce Covner, MD, is an XiMed physician and board member, internist, hospitalist, medical director of XiMed hospitalists and medical director of Scripps Acute Drug and Alcohol Detoxification Program. And, "I make occasional house calls," he said.

By his own estimate, he spends 70 to 80 hours over a five- to seven-day workweek devoting himself to his profession, a pace he has maintained throughout his 31-year medical career.

His practice is unique. Of the 16 hospitalists at XiMed, only two continue in private practice; Dr. Covner is one of the two.

"I split my time between my practice as a primary care physician and my work as a hospitalist," Dr. Covner said in describing his workweek. "XiMed needs both," he added.

When asked about his decision to include work as a hospitalist in his practice routine, Dr. Covner replied, "Internal medicine can be lonely. You spend your time slugging it out in your office." He added that after a lengthy time in the practice of internal medicine a physician's practice narrows itself down to a general socioeconomic and disease-specific group of people. This can be "stifling," he said.

He describes his work as a hospitalist as being the "renaissance of my career." Working as a hospitalist "led me back to active integration with



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a variety of people and a variety of cases.” He said his work as a hospitalist brings him in contact with nurses, administrators and specialists all focused on solving problems for patients.

“There is a lot of activity” as compared to the “reliability and comfort” of his office, he said.

However, hospitalist work is often a routine Dr. Covner describes as “greet, treat and street,” lacking the detailed knowledge of individual patients that comes with private practice.

“This makes me appreciate my practice more,” he said. In his private practice he said he is a small part of his patients’ lives, solving their immediate problems, fine-tuning for the longer term.

“I connect with my patients,” he said. “I like to know my patients in depth.”

Balancing private practice and his work as a hospitalist gives Dr. Covner obvious satisfaction and provides both balance and stimulation.

Dr. Covner received his medical training at Northwestern University, graduating in 1980, and completed his internship and residency at Scripps Mercy Hospital in San Diego.

When asked about the changes he has witnessed in his more than three decades of practice, he said, “It would be easy to say computerization, electronic medical records and payment systems, but that belies the most profound change, the change in patient expectations.”

Dr. Covner noted that today patients expect to be seen within a certain time period, and they want to know in detail about their disease state. “And,” he said, “patients now have the expectation they can access specialty care whenever they so desire.” Also, he noted that patients, especially younger patients, want to take an active role in healthcare.

In keeping with the desire to be involved, Dr. Covner observed, many of his patients are wearing tracking devices and measuring their health at home. For example, he said, “patients are tracking their blood pressure at home” and bringing the data with them to office visits.

Overall, Dr. Covner emphasized how much his work as a hospitalist has “rejuvenated” his career. “I am constantly learning new things. I appreciate the differing responsibilities of my physician brothers and sisters,” he added.

With a look to the future, Dr. Covner is also on a committee at Scripps charged with trying to “scope the future of medicine.”

Although Dr Covner is one physician, he wears many hats — all devoted to patient care.



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