



HIGH-END Health Care

Boutique clinics offer a marriage between medical care and luxury lifestyle. For patients who need specialized care and are willing to pay for it, such facilities are an oasis of excellence.



What do you do if you're a successful, well-heeled individual in need of specialized medical services? These days people willing to pay big dollars can find a variety of top-notch health care delivered with plenty of "extra touches." Imagine crossing a four-star spa resort with the Mayo Clinic and you have an idea of the market niche of these boutique clinics.

THE PAVILION AT MCLEAN HOSPITAL A recent article in the Boston Globe called McLean Hospital "an elite psychiatric refuge." If you log onto its web site www.mcleanhospital.org you will read that The Pavilion at McLean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts, was "created for people requiring expert psychiatric, behavioral, and neurologic consultation...geared to the needs of the private-pay patient and family, offering the kind of choice, flexibility, confidentiality, and service not found in today's health-care world." The Pavilion is just one type of modern day specialty or "boutique" clinic that is going outside the parameters of traditional medicine to offer people who can afford it a unique health-care option.

CLINIC CONTACTS

The Greenbrier Clinic

320 West Main Street
White Sulphur Springs, WV 24986

Specializes in diagnostic evaluation typically over the course of 2 days.

COST: Varies with the diagnostic studies that are needed. Accepts many medical insurance plans and private pay.

CONTACT: Earl Haddad, Director of Marketing and Sales, (304) 536-4870

FAX: (304) 536-1664

WEB SITE: www.greenbrierclinic.com

E-MAIL: eshaddad@greenbrierclinic.com

Heuga Center

27 Main Street, Edwards, CO 81632

Specializes in educational programs for individuals with multiple sclerosis and diabetes.

COST: \$2,000/ 5-day Can Do program. This is subsidized with fundraisers and philanthropy.

CONTACT: Terri Goodman, Vice President of Medical Programs, 1-800-367-3101

FAX: (970) 926-1295

WEB SITE: www.heuga.org

E-MAIL: info@heuga.org

International Rehabilitation Center for Polio

Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital,
570 Worcester Rd, Framingham, MA 01701

Specializes in the treatment of polio survivors from around the world.

COST: Varies depending on specific needs but ranges from \$1,000-1,500/day. Accepts most insurance plans and private pay.

CONTACT: Anna Rubin, Clinic Coordinator, (508) 872-2200

FAX: (508) 872-1205

WEB SITE: www.polioclinic.org

E-MAIL: agrubin@partners.org

The Pavilion

McLean Hospital, 115 Mill Street,
Belmont, MA 02478

Residential treatment for individuals with mental health disorders.

COST: \$2,500/day. Accepts private pay only.

CONTACT: Joan Zabarasky, RN, CS,
Program Director, (617) 855-2997

FAX: (617) 855-3569

WEB SITE: www.mcleanhospital.org

E-MAIL: pavilion@mclean.org ■

BOUTIQUE CLINICS

Continued from previous page

Mark Robart, a licensed social worker who helped to form the concept of The Pavilion, describes it this way: "It is a residential evaluation site for adults who are having significant psychiatric difficulties and who don't require a locked unit, but aren't able to be treated on an outpatient basis." What Robart didn't say, but readily acknowledges, is that these patients have money and are willing to spend it on their medical care. Interestingly, as Alex Vuckovic, the medical director of the Pavilion and an assistant professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School points out, "The source of payment is usually parents or other relatives. But, having said that, [there is] no question that the self-pay nature of

the proposition keeps both parties—patient and treaters—on their toes!"

In fact, for \$2,500 per day (with two weeks prepaid) patients can be picked up at the airport in a limousine and then check into The Pavilion where they will receive top-notch mental health care on the beautiful McLean Hospital campus. Once there, a battery of Boston's finest mental health practitioners are available on a consultative basis. They provide whatever the patients need in terms of testing and treatment. The Pavilion also provides what Mark Robart calls "creature comforts." No cafeteria meals of dubious origin here. Catered food is served in a hotel-like atmosphere. There are six private rooms and a waiting list that is

weeks to months. Also available are acupuncture, massage, and entry to one of the cities' most impressive health clubs. There is an activities therapist and a concierge service that will assist with tickets to see the Boston Red Sox or any other event happening in the area. All of this is included in the daily rate. If patients do not want to stay on-site, they may stay in one of Boston's hotels and the rate drops to \$2,200 per day.

The Pavilion was started on Thanksgiving Day in 1999. It opened initially with three beds and has doubled in size. Approximately 90 percent of patients come from the United States, but the hospital has treated patients from all continents. Nearly everyone flies in from out of town. Patients are allowed to bring a significant other without an additional fee.

When The Pavilion was started, McLean Hospital put up the initial capital to renovate the space and hire the staff. McLean is a non-profit hospital that specializes in psychiatric care. Currently, the only source of funding is the patient revenues. Patients often hear about the clinic through word-of-mouth, because as Robart says, "A lot of these individuals travel in the same circles." Robart notes that they have also done formal advertising in the *New Yorker* and in Ivy League alumni magazines. Mailing brochures to primary care physicians and psychiatrists in affluent parts of the country has also been effective in generating patient referrals.

Patients who come to The Pavilion are adult men and women whose average age is 40 to 50 years. They suffer from a variety of mental illnesses including major depression, bipolar disorder, psychotic disorders, and substance abuse. Vuckovic explains that patients are "remarkably and strikingly" similar to the patients he treated for 14 years on a psy-

Dr. Alex Vuckovic, the medical director of The Pavilion in Belmont, Massachusetts and an assistant professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, was photographed in the dining room of The Pavilion, which features copies of business publications,

chocolates, and fresh flowers. He says there are special motivations inherent in the private-pay system. "The self-pay nature of the proposition keeps both parties—patients and treaters—on their toes!"



PHOTO/ © 2002 DOROTHY LITTEL-GRECO

BOUTIQUE CLINICS

Continued from previous page

chiatric inpatient unit. Although Robart keeps patient names confidential, he does note that they treat celebrities in addition to other well-heeled individuals. Robart says, "When Mariah Carey was recently hospitalized, we could have treated her."

In terms of the medical care, Robart says, "We are not providing services that are not provided in other parts of the hospital, but we are doing it quicker." There is around-the-clock nursing care, and physicians and other consultants are paid a premium to drop everything and see patients at The Pavilion. Robart notes that some physicians see this as inequitable since many patients can't afford these services. But most physicians he works with say it is a wonderful opportunity to provide high quality mental health services in a nurturing environment. Also, this profitable program helps to offset the costs of other programs at McLean.

At the end of their stay, patients are given a comprehensive packet, including a summary of the recommendations and a plan for follow-up care. Robart says that they do have people return to The Pavilion several times, and notes that, "A lot of the patients have very serious refractory illnesses and will come back to us."

THE INTERNATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER FOR POLIO

The International Rehabilitation Center for Polio (IRCP) at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital is located in Framingham, Massachusetts. The IRCP specializes in treating people who have had polio—a disease close to eradication in terms of new cases but still involving millions of survivors worldwide. Anna Rubin, the coordinator for the IRCP says, "We offer a team approach to treating the problems associated with polio and post-polio syndrome." The mission of the IRCP involves more than just patient care and is threefold: (1) treatment for polio sur-

Dr. Thomas Mann, an internist and physician-partner at the Greenbrier Clinic in West Virginia, says he appreciates the amount of time he has to spend with each patient

as well as his surroundings. "This is a dream practice. Greenbrier County, West Virginia is a wonderful place to live...I plan to stay here until I retire."

vivors; (2) research on polio and post-polio syndrome; and, (3) education of the public and healthcare providers about polio-related issues.

The IRCP offers both a private-pay and traditional medical insurance option for treatment. The cost varies depending on the services, but is in the range of \$1,000 to \$1,500 per day for physician and therapy services. Some diagnostic testing is included in this rate, but most testing and equipment (e.g., braces, walkers, or wheelchairs) is additional. Patients who travel from out of town generally stay in one of several local hotels and this fee is not included in the price of the clinic. Limousine service, translators, and other special needs are arranged for patients who need them. Catered meals are served on clinic days to the patients and significant others. Speakers are often brought in to give educational talks on such things as diet, exercise, stress management, and intimacy.

The IRCP officially started in 2001.

However, the staff has specialized in treating polio survivors for several years in a similar but less elaborate clinic environment. One of the reasons for expanding the clinic was that there was a high demand for increased services in the existing clinic. Although there are other centers that treat polio survivors, Rubin says, "The level of expertise in treating polio survivors is often limited and few clinics offer the on-site, trained, and experienced team of professionals that are present at the IRCP." Growth of the center is controlled in order to maintain quality of care, but clinical services are provided to several hundred patients each year, and thousands more get educational materials.

Philanthropic funding and grants have been integral to the success of the IRCP, particularly because the mission involves much more than the typical services that third-party payers cover. The cost of providing the clinical services, however, is generally covered by the patients (either private pay or through medical insurance).



PHOTO / © 2002 THE GREENBRIER CLINIC

BOUTIQUE CLINICS

Continued from previous page

Patients who come to the IRCP vary widely in age and ethnicity. Because polio has been eradicated from the United States since the late 1970s (the last case of the wild virus was in 1979), patients from this country tend to be middle aged and sometimes elderly. The vaccine came out in the mid-1950s and most Americans who had polio contracted it before the vaccine became available. However, in other countries there are still cases of polio and even epidemics—primarily in poorer regions where there is less access to immunization programs. Thus, international patients are often—though not always—younger, usually 15 to 40 years old.

The IRCP offers a number of traditional services with some special services added on—depending again on the needs of the patient. Traditional services include physical, occupational, and speech therapy. Bracing and wheelchair/scooter clinics offer state-of-the-art equipment. Physician evaluations play an important role and testing such as electrodiagnostics are done on site. Speakers come to the clinic and consultants such as nutritionists, mental health providers, and otolaryngologists are either on site or nearby. What makes the IRCP unique is that so many professionals are available—mostly under one roof—who are skilled and experienced with the intricacies of treating polio survivors.

THE GREENBRIER CLINIC

Another specialized center is the Greenbrier Clinic which is located in the west wing of the luxurious five-star Greenbrier resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. According to its Web site, www.greenbrier-clinic.com, “In 1948, the founders of the Greenbrier Clinic reasoned that healthy people make for healthy corporations. To ensure the good health of the nation’s top executives, the clinic was formed with the objective of providing complete diagnostic health care...” Although the Greenbrier

Clinic was initially formed to treat top executives, its scope is now much broader. While still specializing in elite corporate health care, the specialists at the clinic also see a much broader spectrum of patients.

Indeed people come from all over to have a comprehensive diagnostic work-up. The Greenbrier Clinic does take medical insurance and will bill third-party payers. Many corporate clients pay directly—typically through their company. Patients self-pay for whatever is not covered by their medical insurance. According to a clinic brochure, an average complete physical is approximately \$1,700 to \$1,800. This fee covers a “core exam” which includes history and physical examination, audiogram, orthorater, tonometry, pulmonary function tests, electrocardiogram, laboratory studies (complete blood count, lipid profile, chemistry panel, and urinalysis), chest x-ray, final consultation with the physician, and a written report. Other diagnostic testing or procedures are additional.

Lodging is additional and nearly everyone stays at the world famous Greenbrier resort where they are able to enjoy all of the amenities including three championship golf courses, tennis courts, and a spa. Some of the 50 plus activities one can participate in at the Greenbrier resort include fly fishing, mountain biking, horseback riding, trap shooting, billiards, and bowling. The cuisine is also world class. The rooms at the resort range in price from \$230 to \$760 per day.

Earl Haddad is the recently hired, first-ever, marketing director for the Greenbrier Clinic. He says, “We are an oasis of diagnostic excellence.” While other famous diagnostic clinics exist, such as the Mayo Clinic and the Cleveland Clinic, Haddad claims the Greenbrier Clinic is special. He calls it “high touch,” where the physicians see a maximum of four new patients a day. Physicians spend 60 to 90 minutes with

patients over two days. Behind the scenes they also review medical records and results of diagnostic testing. In a letter Haddad sends out to people requesting brochures, he writes, “The hallmark of a Clinic experience is an efficient, complete, prevention-oriented health examination in a relaxed and pleasing setting.”

Dr. Thomas Mann is an internist and physician-partner at the Greenbrier Clinic who comments that, “Undoubtedly the best feature is the amount of time I have to spend with each patient.” Dr. Mann sees a maximum of 10 patients each day and says, “This kind of time with an individual patient is almost unheard of in most practices.” Dr. Mann reports that his colleagues, whom he describes as “extremely well trained, very personable, easy to work with, and exceptional clinicians,” share his enthusiasm. For physicians, Mann says, “This is a dream practice. Greenbrier County, West Virginia is a wonderful place to live...I plan to stay here until I retire.”

Unlike The Pavilion, there is no treatment offered at the Greenbrier Clinic. Haddad says, “We are not here to treat symptoms.” Rather, the focus is on diagnostic testing, which typically is carried out over a two-day period. Each person’s testing is individualized based on medical history and symptoms. One of the clinic brochures reads, “One size fits all might work for some things. But, never at the Greenbrier Clinic.” The medical staff consists of eight internists (including one cardiologist and two endocrinologists), two radiologists, a psychologist, and a registered dietician. There are 75 staff members who cater to more than 5,000 patients each year. Most of the patients are from out of state and people often return multiple times for consultations. Haddad notes that one patient just completed his 47th visit.

For more than 50 years, the Greenbrier Clinic existed without any formal marketing. Haddad notes that before he was

BOUTIQUE CLINICS

Continued from previous page

hired last year, the clinic “grew exponentially by word of mouth.” Haddad says that his plan is to do more formal marketing by giving talks and meeting with corporate executives. At this time, he has no plans to advertise in publications or do other types of traditional advertising.

THE JIMMY HEUGA CENTER

The Jimmy Heuga Center is yet another variant of these specialized medical clinics. According to Terri Goodman, the vice president of medical programs, “The Heuga center is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with multiple sclerosis and diabetes.” The primary program that is offered through the Heuga Center is called the CAN DO program. This is a five-day program offered to people with multiple sclerosis (MS) and their families. According to a brochure for the center, “The CAN DO program focuses on the health of a person as a whole—physical, mental, and emotional... Lectures and workshops educate participants about exercise, nutrition, MS symptom management, goal setting, stress management and more.”

Goodman notes that the CAN DO program is oriented more toward education than treatment. In fact, this educational approach is what really differentiates this center from many others. Dr. George Garmany has been a neurology consultant for the Heuga Center since 1985. He notes that the entire approach is educational and that the “patients” are called participants because of the “extra level of engagement” by the attendees.

CAN DO programs are offered around the country with two programs a year done in Vail, Colorado, near the Heuga headquarters. All of the programs are held in hotels in order to foster a “non-clinical environment.” The regular five-day CAN DO offers lectures, workshops, clinical evaluations, and group discussions. The lectures

include topics such as “Bladder Management and Sexual Function” and “MS: Facts, Treatment and Research.” Workshops include “Fatigue and Cognitive Strategies” and “Aquatic Exercise.” Clinical evaluations are not typical physician-patient evaluations but do contain some of the usual elements. Clinical evaluations listed in the brochure include body mass index, cognitive screen, gait analysis, and vision screen. The CAN DO program has expanded with shorter follow-up sessions that are “available for alumni.”

Jimmy Heuga, an Olympic medalist who was diagnosed with MS at the height of his skiing career, founded the Heuga Center in 1984. In 1970, when Heuga was diagnosed, he received the standard medical advice at that time: Don’t exercise—rest and conserve your energy. Heuga, an exercise fanatic, didn’t want to follow that advice and instead founded The Heuga Center that promotes exercise and other aspects of healthy living. Most of the funding for the center comes from philanthropy and fundraising efforts including ski races that are held throughout the country. Goodman notes, “There is a lot of history with a lot of the people involved. It is a lot of fun [and] a very feel-good event.” These events pay for the center’s staff, which includes 10 full-time and two part-time employees. They also cover two-thirds of the total \$6,000-per-couple cost of the CAN DO programs with the other one-third coming from the participants. Scholarships are available for participants who can’t afford the \$2,000 fee.

The CAN DO programs are organized to accommodate 25 people with multiple sclerosis and 25 spouses or significant others. A team of 25 to 50 health-care professionals provides a comprehensive and individualized experience for the participants. Goodman says, “Most staff have real jobs and then come in twice a year.” The consultants include physicians, physi-

cal and occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, nutritionists, and mental health professionals. The patients and health professionals share their meals and interact both formally and informally throughout the five days. For doctors and therapists who are burdened with paperwork and managed care restrictions, Goodman says, “This is health-care utopia for medical professionals.”

Goodman explains that there is a little formal advertising for the CAN DO programs, but that they generally fill up simply by word of mouth. Advertising in *Inside MS*, the official magazine of the National MS Society, has done a lot to reach target clientele. Often local MS societies will sponsor the programs and they will help with promoting the sessions as well.

There are many innovative “boutique” clinics that are catering to the needs of people who want more than what the current medical system has to offer. What makes these specialty centers work is that they offer services that have an enormous positive impact on their clients’ lives. The success of these programs speaks to the fact that many people really do value their health and they are willing to pay a premium to obtain medical treatment. As health-care providers face increasing financial obstacles that often prevent them from delivering the kind of medical care that patients need and want, those with entrepreneurial spirits may find that boutique clinics offer exciting new opportunities. ■

Julie K. Silver, MD is the medical director of the International Rehabilitation Center for Polio at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital. Dr. Silver became interested in boutique and specialized medical clinics when forming this center last year. She is also an assistant professor at Harvard Medical School and the author of the newly released book, Post Polio Syndrome: A Guide for Polio Survivors and their Families (Yale University Press).