



BEAUMONT  
DERMATOLOGY &  
FAMILY PRACTICE

August 25, 2016

To my loyal and valued patients,

As many already know, I am in the process of leaving my current office at Beaumont Dermatology and Family Practice and establishing a new location due to personal circumstances. It is my intention to continue to work here until the year ends and begin in the new office in January 2017. But it is a work in progress, and some of the deciding factors are not yet determined, nor are they under my control.

But please anticipate this change when you seek appointments in the coming months. Once the new address and insurance contracts are confirmed, you will be able to call Beaumont Dermatology and Family Practice for details.

The biggest change which will impact a great number of you is that I have reluctantly realized I must opt out of Medicare. When the Social Security Act amendments were signed into law in 1965 by Lyndon Johnson, creating Medicare and Medicaid, the government made a pledge never to interfere with the practice of medicine. The responsibility of carrying out meaningful, competent care was intended to remain in the hands of physicians. Gradually this has failed. Physicians have become a commodity that government is able to use for profit. By forcing us to use computers, government is rewarded by the computer industry. By forcing us to replace the 13,000 complex diagnosis codes which served well for decades with 68,000 new ones ("ICD-10"), government is rewarded by data mining companies. When we, in reply, voice that these overwhelming changes are too costly for us to comply with, we are penalized and our reimbursement is cut by many percents yearly. Additionally, we operate in confusion and uncertainty, never knowing if we are following the thousands of pages' worth of rules and codes correctly, scared constantly of the penalty if errors are made with billing or compliance.

It is with tremendous sadness that I surrender to the weight of these considerations. I have refused to give in for over a decade! But now that I must create and manage my own practice, I regret that I would not be competent to navigate this extraordinarily complex mess AND run a practice well. I must continue to prioritize the basic goal of medicine, to restore each patient to health with dignity and privacy. And I committed to my specialty, back when I trained, to remain dedicated to dermatology with enthusiasm and insistence on lifelong learning. It is in order to stay true to these that I have had to opt out.

I am deeply sorry that I will lose the relationships with so many of you whom it has been a joy to treat. I have relished getting to know you and your families, your stories, opinions, and jokes. You have taught me so much. I know that it will be a disruption for you to switch to a new dermatologist, but fortunately I believe that I am the only dermatologist in our area that has opted out. Therefore, you will likely not face much difficulty being accommodated in scheduling ongoing care. If, however, you choose to remain under my care, Medicare has yet another hoop through which we must jump. It is required that you sign an affidavit acknowledging that I have opted out and pledging not to submit a claim for my service except under emergent circumstances. Always a loophole.

I hope to develop a website in conjunction with my new practice, on which I will post a simplified Fee Schedule; the kind of thing that anyone can understand, the kind with no complexity and no frustrating double meanings unlike Medicare language. It would be such a privilege to retain any among you. But I clearly understand that it is not going to be financially feasible for most. I want to thank you whole-heartedly for the many rewarding years of getting to know and treat you all.

Warm regards,

Sharon M.H. Marchand, M.D.