How group affiliation allows pediatrician to practice independently

AUG 18, 2022

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Thriving in Private Practice

Becoming your own boss: Transitioning into private practice affiliated with a health system

Jun 30, 2022

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For many physicians, operating a private practice, means delivering personalized care to their patients in the way they choose. While some may also enjoy the do-it-yourself aspect of managing the business side of the practice, there are alternatives for those who would rather leave those duties to someone else.

For Sonal G. Patel, MD, an AMA member who leads the Magnificent Minds Neurology Center in Bethesda, Maryland, partnering with Privia Health provided her with support she needed in structuring her business, connecting an IT system and ensuring compliance in relevant legal matters—allowing her to concentrate on patient care.

“Support from a partnership allowed me to actualize the vision of autonomy that led me to start a private practice,” Dr. Patel wrote in an AMA column. “By not doing this on my own, I had more independence to focus on what mattered most to me—delivering the highest-quality neurological care to my patients in the way that I want to.”

Priva is a member of the AMA Health System Program, which provides enterprise solutions to equip leadership, physicians and care teams with resources to help drive the future of medicine.

Dr. Patel recently shared her story in “Becoming your own boss: Transitioning into private practice affiliated with a health system,” an episode of the “AMA Thriving in Private Practice” podcast.

Dr. Patel completed her pediatrics residency at Rush University Medical College, followed by a pediatric neurology residency at Northwestern University/Children’s Memorial Hospital. She then completed her fellowship in clinical neurophysiology specializing in epilepsy at The Ohio State University/Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Columbus.

“In academic practice, so much is done for you that you don’t get exposed to the business ins and outs of practice,” Dr. Patel said on the podcast, adding that she needed to learn those business aspects of
medical practice quickly.

“I do feel as though the things that were difficult were primarily things like billing and insurance, because that was something I really wasn't previously exposed to or responsible for,” she said. “Being in private practice, whether you're ordering tests or figuring out medications that are on formulary, those are done through a system that insurance is required to authorize.”

Seeking practice autonomy, control

Dr. Patel was working at Children’s Hospital of Orange County as a pediatric neurologist when she asked herself do I want to leave my hospital system and become a physician with an independent practice?

“My answer was a resounding ‘yes,’ in fact, navigating difficult decisions was one of the main reasons why I wanted to establish my own practice,” Dr. Patel wrote in her column.

“Practice ownership meant more autonomy, more independence, more control over my destiny as a physician to change health care and help my patients,” she added. “This monumental decision was followed by another, equally perplexing question: How?”

Dr. Patel decided that what she wanted was to have her own practice but with an affiliation with a larger medical group. In researching her options, she learned about Privia and then spoke with a Privia-affiliated neurologist who told her that Privia could provide the practice arrangement she was looking for.

“You run your office exactly the way you want to, but you have the support of having the same electronic medical record system and billing system and ability to look at your charts with your colleagues that are also part of Privia Medical Group,” Dr. Patel said on the podcast.

“One of the biggest efficiencies is credentialing,” she added. “They completely hold your hand through all of your insurance credentialing.”

In addition, Privia helped her with legal compliance issues, IT setup, recruiting staff, marketing and website design.

“It is a daunting task to start your own business when you're trained” as a physician, Dr. Patel said. “So to be able to have that help, have a place to ask for that help, I think it was what gave me the confidence to move forward was starting my own practice.”