

**Dr. Nick Petropolis
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April 24, 2024

Dear Family Practice patient, I am excited to announce that Dr. Marlise Sovka will be joining Care 4 You in May to 'job share' with me. Dr. Sovka has been with our clinic for the past 5 years, initially as a resident in training physician, then as a locum physician covering me while I was on vacation. I have the utmost trust and confidence in Dr. Sovka's care, and many of you who have had visits with her over the years share those same sentiments.

You are probably wondering why I have made this decision and what it means for two physicians to share a practice.

Why: Since starting my family practice in New Westminster in 2011 much has changed in the world, particularly the responsibilities of family physicians have increased significantly, and my patients' health needs have increased as your families have grown, and you have aged.

Care 4 You and I have adapted to meet these changing needs, working with practice coaches and quality improvement consultants to adjust how we offer care. I recently completed a review of my patient panel with the Ministry of Health and Doctors of BC, and it was clear that to support all 1000 of my patients I would have to make significant changes, as the extra hours and weekends I am currently working are not sustainable.

I was faced with two choices, to reduce my patient panel, or find someone to share the work of caring for you. Earlier this year I discharged from my practice all patients who were living outside the Fraser Health authority community. This step was not enough of a reduction in workload, and thus I sought out someone to share the work of caring for you, and Dr. Sovka was the natural choice. We very much hope that this will stabilize our family practice and allow us to be your Family Doctors for years to come.

How: So, what does two physicians "job sharing" look like for you as a patient?

First, you have a say in this process, as you get to choose if you want to continue to be a patient of ours. We expect to have personal conversations with all of you about how this will work, and we will respect your decision if you want to continue to be under our care or transfer to another Family Physician.

In practical terms, Dr. Sovka and I will function as one doctor: when you need care you will continue to book an appointment online or by calling the office, and the staff will offer you the next available appointment. If you prefer to wait to see one of us in particular, that is your choice. If you prefer to be seen sooner by whichever of us is next available, that is also your choice.

Typically only one of us will be working on any given day. The overall plan is that combined, both Dr. Sovka and I will work more days each month than I am currently able to do. Our goal is to reduce the current wait time of 5 weeks for non-urgent appointments.

As part of the new provincial Ministry of Health Family Physician registry program, all of you are currently registered under my name. As Dr. Sovka starts working, we will move a number of you under her name in the system. Rest assured this is only an administrative change, and as stated above, you will still be my patient (as well as Dr. Sovka's).

Changes: Through this transition you may notice some administrative changes, as we need to standardize our work processes and policies to ensure consistency within our work. Specifically, we are updating our system for triaging urgent patient appointment requests, defining our workflows for different visit types, and reviewing our shared office policies (see attached).

In closing, I am so honored to be your Family Physician, and to be invited into the most intimate moments of your life. I imagine that this news comes with mixed emotions and thoughts for you. Ultimately this change must happen to prevent me from burning out and having to completely close the practice, and I hope that you can see this as I do, a positive opportunity and the next stage in our patient-physician relationship.

Sincerely,

Dr Nick Petropolis

Dr. Petropolis and Dr. Sovka Office Policies

- Patient medical home philosophy: We believe that every patient should have a medical “home”, a central place where they can access care in a timely, comprehensive way, supported by a team of healthcare professionals with varied skills. Care 4 You has grown our team to now include two Registered Nurses, a Pharmacist, Social Worker, Dietician, Clinical Counselors, and an Internal Medicine specialist. This model aligns with our belief that for optimal care, a patient should be able to access their care team in-person and virtually, in a timely way, and those providing their care should have access to all the vital information about the patient within a central medical record.
- Same day and urgent assessments: With the addition of Dr. Sovka, and with renewed support from our two Registered Nurses, we are increasing the number of same day appointments reserved for urgent concerns. When you call with an urgent concern, our team will triage your request to assist with options for care to meet your needs.
- Use of Walk-in clinics: We understand that the wait time for an appointment at Care4You has become longer. Some of you have chosen to access walk-in clinics, alternate online telehealth, urgent primary care clinics, or even the ER for your care. With the increase in both same day urgent appointments and regular appointments, our hope is that patients will no longer need to seek care outside of Care 4 You. The expectation will be for our patients to call us first when they need non-emergency care. Patients that continue to seek care outside of their medical home (Care 4 You) will be invited to discuss how we can further improve to meet their needs, and if Care 4 You is still their preferred place for medical care.
- After hours care: If you require urgent care in the evenings and weekends when the office is closed, one of our practitioners is always on call to support your health. Please call the office and listen to the voice message with instructions about how to leave a message for the on-call practitioner.
- Telephone and in-person visits:
 - The practice of medicine has expanded from exclusively being solely in person appointments, to include interactions with physicians over email, phone, and video visits. This has allowed patients easier access to care when it is difficult for them to make it into an in-person appointment and made accessing care more convenient. However, this has come with some drawbacks, specifically the potential for inferior assessments as a large part of a physician's work involves what they see, and their physical examination of a patient.
 - We feel that telephone appointments are best suited for simple medical concerns that don't require a physical assessment. If the physician feels that an in-person visit is medically appropriate, we expect patients to be willing to attend the office in-person when requested.
- Receiving local care: In alignment with the “Patient Medical Home” philosophy, it is essential for optimal care that patients live within the same community as their health care team. This ensures patients can receive timely in-person care when required. Patients who move outside of the Fraser Health community will need to seek care from a new family physician in their new community. We would continue to provide them care during a reasonable transition period in accordance with local standards.

- Appointment expectations:
 - Phone and in-person appointments are scheduled for 10 minutes each, which usually allows us to appropriately address one or two concerns. We understand that it isn't convenient to make multiple appointments to discuss all your medical requests. We also feel that the thoroughness and quality of our assessment should not be compromised by trying to do too much in one visit.
 - We will start each appointment by mutually prioritizing your requests, and scheduling another appointment for concerns that weren't completed that day.
 - If you feel your concern requires more time, please discuss this with the office staff when booking your appointment.
 - When someone has a chronic ongoing condition, especially one that requires a prescription and ongoing follow up, we recommend that they book individual follow up appointments. This enables us to specifically focus on each condition and its associated medications. You will be required to schedule separate appointments for new conditions.
 - Work safe and ICBC appointments require a separate appointment from any other medical concerns.
- Late and missed appointments:
 - If you are running late to your appointment, please call the office ASAP to inform us. We will do our best to accommodate you, though out of respect for the other patient's who are scheduled, we may need to rebook your appointment.
 - We require 1 business day's notice if you need to cancel your appointment so we can offer your appointment to other patients.
 - Missed appointments or late cancellations will be charged a no-show fee.
- Prescription renewals: It is our policy that all prescription renewals require patients to book a visit. The standard is that patients will be given the amount of medication by their physician to last until the associated medical condition needs to be reassessed. Please do not ask your pharmacy to send a refill request to our office, instead book a follow up visit **well** in advance of your medications running out.
- Discussing other family members: On occasion family members will ask to speak with us about another patient; this has included parents asking about their young children, and family asking about their partner or disabled/frail loved one. Unfortunately, even with the patient's permission we are required to have the patient present during the visit or phone conversation. This rule is very frustrating to us, though we must follow it. As such we expect that if your loved one needs our care, that they will be present during the visit, even if you are speaking on their behalf. Please share with our office staff if you require special accommodation for you and your family members' schedule.
- Uninsured services: Several physician services are not covered by the government which include: most insurance forms, work notes, physicals and third party exams. Patients will be expected to pay for these services. Our staff can provide you with a list of these costs upon request. If you have any financial difficulties paying for these services, please speak to staff so we can offer an alternate payment solution.

Sincerely,

Dr. Petropolis and Dr. Sovka