

Direct Care

Plum Health in Detroit is expanding its direct primary care practice across metro Detroit

BY R.J. KING | SAL RODRIGUEZ

Being charged more for less didn't sit well with Dr. Paul Thomas, a partner at Plum Health DPC, a direct primary care practice that is the first of its kind in Detroit and Wayne County.

"Overall, the health care industry is raising costs with no associated increase in services or benefits," says Thomas, who is board-certified in family medicine and a graduate of the Wayne State University School of Medicine, where he is a clinical assistant professor. "You're often being charged more for less."

After graduating in 2013, and completing his residency in 2016, Thomas decided to strike out on his own. Along the way, he researched direct primary care practices after hearing about what are commonly referred to as non-affiliated health care membership organizations at a medical conference.

From there, Thomas visited DPC practices in Denver and Kansas before writing a business plan for what today is Plum Health DPC. He launched the business in late 2016 in Detroit's Hubbard Richard neighborhood before moving to a brand-new space along Michigan Avenue in Corktown at a mixed-use development called The Corner, which replaced Tiger Stadium.

A second practice is scheduled to open shortly along Woodward Avenue, near Fourth Street, in Royal Oak. Overall, Thomas, along with fellow physicians Dr. Raquel Orlich and Dr. Leslie Rabaut,



LYDIA MICHAEL

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CLEAR MARGINS
Dr. Paul Thomas is part of Plum Health DPC in Detroit, a direct primary care practice that's expanding across the region. The practice plans to have six offices in the next five years.



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"We charge \$75 a month in exchange for providing primary care services, including an annual wellness exam and basic office procedures," Thomas says. "We also provide at-cost imaging services, medications at wholesale prices, and at-cost laboratory testing. We typically see our patients within a day or two of a call."

In addition, there are no copays, and DPC physicians — there are 2,060 such practices in the United States, according to Elation Health — provide better communication with their patients. Thomas says an affiliated family doctor sees between 25 and 35 patients a day. At Plum Health, his daily schedule includes appointments with five to seven patients.

"We serve individuals, and small- and medium-sized businesses," Thomas says. "We take a holistic approach with our patients. We sit down and discuss long-term health goals, provide nutritional advice, and offer transparency on costs. There are no hidden fees."

While Thomas doesn't recommend canceling individual health care insurance or cost-sharing plans, he says Plum Health physicians can take care of 80 percent to 90 percent of patient needs.

"We offer the best of both worlds," he says. "We take care of most patients at our office, but if you need a knee or a shoulder replacement, there are specialists in our region who can undertake the procedure." **DB**

PDA Q&A: THE E-INTERVIEW

DB: WHERE ARE YOU?

LM: In New York City. I'm here as part of release week for my new book.

DB: HOW'S IT GOING?

LM: I'm meeting with the publishing team and some of the brands and companies I featured in the book, which is called "Brand Love: Building Strong Consumer-Brand Connections." Kogan Page

Ltd., in the U.K., is the publisher, and they have offices in New York City and Delhi, India. It's my first book. It's 208 pages, and it's available anywhere books are sold.

DB: WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

LM: The topic of brand love started in 2016 when I was working at L'Oréal in Germany. It's where I learned what brand love

was and how to introduce a brand, launch a campaign, and build brand awareness over time. That naturally led me to speak about the topic, and then I wanted to tell the story about brand love and how it works.

DB: WHO'S THE AUDIENCE?

LM: I feature multiple global brands with case studies about how they

did something in the marketplace and how it turned out. It's truly multicultural. The book is for marketing and branding professionals, entrepreneurs, and anyone who oversees one or multiple brands that are consumer-facing.

DB: WHAT'S YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY?

LM: I'm doing media

interviews and podcasts. I featured over 100 brands (in the book), and I'm setting up workshops with those companies and others. I show people how to introduce and grow a successful brand. Plus, you can always come back to the book to apply new brand strategies. ■

— R.J. King