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## Health Doctors Who Deliver

Anna Vander Broek, 02.16.07, 12:01 AM ET



In Pictures: Doctors Who Deliver

Jim Rimarcik, chairman and CEO of PHT Systems, a St. Louis-based commercial cooking and food services supplier, had just gotten back from a business trip to the U.K. last spring when his back gave out in his room at the Four Seasons in Chicago.

A native of Minneapolis, Rimarcik, 62, had an important board meeting to attend the next morning before continuing home. He had been on the road for a week and did not want to spend nine hours in the ER waiting room. But he was in too much pain to ignore. So he called the concierge and was told that a physician would be at his door in under an hour.

The physician was sent by [Inn-House Doctor](#), a nationwide firm catering to business travelers. There was no hailing cabs, waiting room stays, filling out papers or paying exorbitant ambulance fees. The base price for a visit from an Inn-House Doctor physician is \$300; the nationwide average rate for a trip to the ER is \$560, according to a 2006 survey by the Agency for Health Care Research & Quality, a division of the Department of Health & Human Services. The doctor who examined Rimarcik conducted a full medical exam and immediately prescribed two different pain relievers.

### In Pictures: Doctors Who Deliver

It was as easy as ordering room service.

"The experience was rather extraordinary," Rimarcik says. "I do a great deal of traveling, and getting sick is bad, but it's doubly bad being away from home."

Walter Krause, president of Inn-House Doctor, agrees.

"When people are traveling there is the incident of illness. Then there is the question, What do they do?" he says. "The same doctor you would wait six hours at the hospital to see will come directly to your hotel room."

Avoiding the emergency room not only saves time, it apparently saves money as well.

"The average cost for an emergency room

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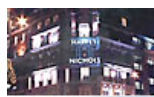
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visit [in New York City] is \$530," says Naomi Friedman, founder of [SickDay](#), a medical house call service in Manhattan. "I would much rather be treated in the comfort of my home or hotel room for less than half the cost."

**For Nontravelers Alike**

Not only do health care services like Inn-House Doctor and SickDay relieve road warriors, they are just as convenient for local businesspeople. An executive with a killer migraine hours before a crucial board meeting or an ailing CEO about to embark on a transcontinental flight won't have to cancel their plans to get the health care they require.

Mark Price, CEO and co-founder of Coral Gables, Fla.-based [My Home Doctor](#), thinks that what we've "seen in health care over the past six years are people like you and me that are highly frustrated with getting primary care treatment. ... The ER for somebody that is not local is very impersonal and scary because they don't know the better hospitals. When you call My Home Doctor you are calling a physician in the community."

With low prices and the promise of potentially avoiding a trip to the ER on their side, it's no wonder the number of firms offering doorstep doctors is growing.

My Home Doctor's physicians saw their first patient in September 2006; the company has plans to expand to 14 areas in the U.S. in the next year and a half. SickDay, founded in December, also foresees expanding to other urban areas in the next six months.

This means it will be easier than ever to pick up the phone and call a doctor.

As retired marketing executive Jim Bruce, 77, another Inn-House patient, puts it, "It's not a fear of going to the ER, it's a satisfaction knowing I don't have to."

**In Pictures: Doctors Who Deliver**

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