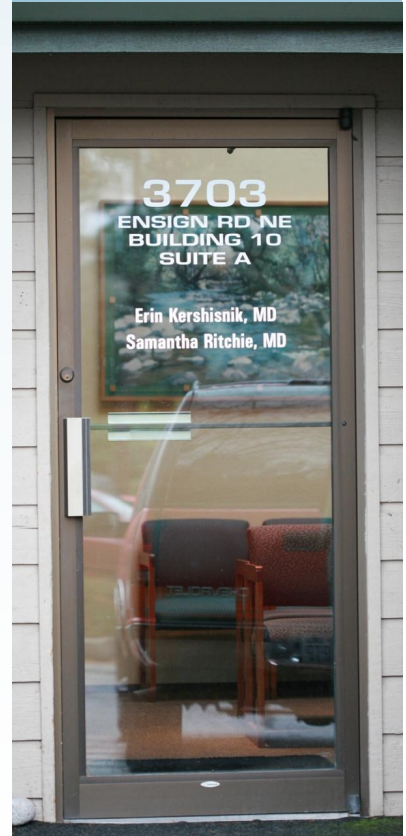


Vantage Voice

Open Enrollment is Ending Soon

If you are a Medicare Patient, open enrollment ends December 7th. For plans through [Washington Healthplanfinder](#), enrollment is open through January 31, 2016. Our last newsletter focused extensively on the difference between an HMO and a PPO and what works best with our practice. We want to remind our members **not** to sign up with an HMO plan if they wish to continue to have a Vantage Physician manage their care. Traditional fee-for-service plans such as preferred provider organizations (PPO) or indemnity plans (fee-for-service) will allow us to best coordinate your care. In general, these are the only plans that will allow patients to make appointments with specialists without the need for a referral or approval and do not require that a patient's primary care physician be in a specific network.

As a Medicare enrollee, it is important **not** to sign up with a \$0 monthly payment plan option where your Medicare part B is covered under an HMO or "Advantage" Plan. These plans require you to have a "gatekeeper". A gatekeeper is a health insurance term used to describe the person in charge of a patient's treatment. Anyone who receives health insurance coverage in the form of a managed care plan, specifically a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) plan, is assigned a gatekeeper or allowed to choose one. In some cases, the patient is instructed to choose a primary care physician from a list, and that doctor becomes the gatekeeper for that patient. A gatekeeper's duty primarily is to manage a patient's treatment. This means that the gatekeeper is in charge of authorizing the patient's referrals, hospitalizations, and lab studies. When a patient falls ill or needs to be referred to a specialist, the patient contacts the gatekeeper who, in turn, refers the patient to doctors and specialists within the plan network. Your Vantage Doctor does not participate with any HMOs and is not authorized to be a gatekeeper. If you have this insurance, you can opt to see a Vantage Physician, but your insurance will not pay for services we order such as lab, diagnostic studies, or hospitalizations.



Inside this issue

Calendar.....	2
Urine Tox Screens	3
New Patient Referrals	3
New Website	4
Testimonials.....	4

Sunday		Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday	
1	November	2	Dr. Ritchie out of office	3	Dr. Ritchie out of office	4		5	Dr. Ker-shisnik out of office	6		7	
8		9		10	Dr. Ritchie out of office	11		12	Dr. Ker-shisnik out of office	13		14	
15		16		17	Dr. Ritchie out of office	18		19	Dr. Ker-shisnik out of office	20		21	
22		23		24	Dr. Ritchie out of office	25		26	Office closed Thanks-giving	27	Office closed Thanks-giving	28	
29	December	30	Dr. Ritchie out of office	1	Dr. Ritchie out of office	2		3	Dr. Ker-shisnik out of office	4		5	
6		7		8	Dr. Ritchie out of office	9		10	Dr. Ker-shisnik out of office	11		12	
13		14		15	Dr. Ritchie out of office	16		17	Dr. Ker-shisnik out of office	18		19	
20		21		22	Dr. Ritchie out of office	23		24	Dr. K out Office closed at noon	25		26	
27		28	Dr. Ker-shisnik out of office	29	Dr. Ker-shisnik out of office	30	Dr. Ker-shisnik out of office	31	Dr. K out Office closed at noon	1	Office closed New Years	2	
3	January	4		5	Dr. Ritchie out of office	6		7	Dr. Ker-shisnik out of office	8		9	
10		11		12	Dr. Ritchie out of office	13		14	Dr. Ker-shisnik out of office	15		16	
17		18	Office closed ML King Day	19	Dr. Ritchie out of office	20		21	Dr. Ker-shisnik out of office	22		23	
24		25		26	Dr. Ritchie out of office	27		28	Dr. K out of office	29		30	



Are you taking a “controlled” medication?

The Washington State Department of Health Guidelines for Management of Pain, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Federation of State Medical Boards have guidelines we must follow when prescribing certain medications. If you take a medication that requires you to pick up a written prescription or are taking Suboxone, you have signed a narcotics agreement stating you agree to random urine screenings to confirm appropriate levels of your prescribed medication.

For the past year, we have been sending these specimens to Precision Toxicology for analysis. In accordance with standard practices, billing for this screening is done per drug tested. Dr. Ritchie and Dr. Kershisnik have custom panels they screen for and a urine test will be billed to your insurance for approximately \$300. Precision bills all insurance, so be sure we have your current insurance card on file when we collect a specimen. Medicare and Medicaid and some private insurances will pay in full. If you have a balance after your insurance pays, or if you do not have insurance, Precision Diagnostics offers a 30% prompt pay discount when you pay within 14 days after the date of the first billing statement. Precision Toxicology also has a Patient Assistance Program for patients whose documented household income is less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. If you receive a bill with a patient due balance, that you are unable to afford, please call them at (858)274-4813 as you may be eligible for a discount.

We do realize that paying out of pocket can be difficult and may present undue hardship for some patients without insurance. As part of our ongoing commitment to patient care, we have purchased urine toxicology screening kits we can do in our office. These screens are \$10 each and must be paid for at the time of service. We do not bill your insurance and lab services are not part of your membership fees. You may choose to do the in-house toxicology screen or it may be required as part of your treatment. However, if the test comes up negative for a medication you are supposed to be taking or positive for a drug you are not supposed to be taking, we will have to send a specimen out to the lab for confirmation.

Referrals

The highest compliment or thanks we could receive would be a referral from you of a friend, co-worker, or family member. Our practice is successful because of referrals from patients like you, and we thank you for your thoughtfulness in the passing of our name. We'd like to continue to grow our practice, so please don't hesitate to [send them our way](#). We promise to give them the same personalized service! And if there is anything else we can do for you, please let us know.



For every referral you send to us, we will send you a Starbucks card. Great patients like you are hard to find, but your referrals make it easier. Each referral we receive is affirmation that we are accomplishing our mission.



Vantage Physicians

At Vantage Physicians, we are deeply committed to providing prompt, friendly, quality medical care to our patients. Our practice model allows us to focus on our patient's needs rather than the requirements of their insurance carrier. We are free to focus on the primary interaction in healthcare: the patient-physician relationship.

New Year—New Website

We are working with a website developer to rework our website to be more mobile friendly. We hope to unveil the new look at the beginning of the year. You will still be able to find your favorite links like our calendar which enables you to plan your medication refills and know when your doctor will be out of town.

Testimonials

If you have visited our website or our Facebook page, you may have read a few of the recommendations our patients have written about our practice. We plan to include a page dedicated to these acknowledgements on our new website. If you have any stories you would like to share of when someone at Vantage went above and beyond for you, please share them with us at info@vantagephysicians.net or when you visit us in person.



For those of you wanting daily encouragement to make health choices during the holiday season, like us on Facebook and/or Twitter!

Vantage Physicians

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