

I can make you feel good

The best doctors don't just fix your body, they give you peace of mind. Dr Martin Scurr introduces the UK's top 21 private GPs

AT THE START OF MY CAREER IN PRIVATE GENERAL practice, in Notting Hill in the late 1970s, I was subject to some criticism from NHS colleagues. Somewhat disparagingly, they would tell me that the only qualifications needed to become a successful private doctor were availability, affability and ability – in that order.

There are plenty of long-held myths about private GPs: that they only refer patients to specialists with whom they play bridge or see on the golf course; or are so close they are all godparents to each other's children. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

There are surprisingly few private GPs – perhaps 200 or 300 across the UK, of whom more than half are based in London. They spend more time with their patients, and, by remaining in charge of their patients' care, provide continuity of support.

Some of the best medical graduates become private GPs in order to have the freedom to practise medicine in the way they were trained. For my part, when I chose this path, I soon discovered new and very different specialist subgroups emerging: in orthopaedics, I would refer patients to a different specialist for shoulder problems than for trouble with a knee, and a different specialist again if the diagnosis was osteoarthritis of the hip.

Life experience adds greatly to the skill and wisdom of a doctor. As a general rule, you should be looking for someone who has at least 10 years of experience as a GP, but is young enough to be able to give you 20 years or more of dedicated service. Long-term continuity of care must be a guiding principle: while it may feel reassuring to choose a wise, grand individual with grey hair and a depth of experience, they will very likely have retirement on the horizon. All the private GPs recommended here are aged between mid-30s and 40s.

Seek an initial consultation – think of it as an interview that works both ways. Any private GP not willing to do this is not worth joining. Be wary of a receptionist who is unfriendly, or one who tries to pass you to a junior member of the team. A reputable private GP will have devoted staff who are welcoming, amenable and happy to explain how the practice works. Getting to see your chosen GP should be smooth and easy, however busy the practice – making an appointment should not be an obstacle race. Last, but not least, do not be disheartened if your medical issue is complex. A private GP cannot know everything – but they know where to look, who to ask and how to arrange care.

These are *Tatler's* doctors of distinction – selected with the advice of consultant specialists and many recommendations. Which one will be your top doc?

LONDON

Dr Alison Joy

An outstanding diagnostic physician, Dr Joy has a diploma in sports medicine, served as the doctor for the Royal Ballet School and was on the board of the Rambert dance company. The Cambridge graduate now has a single-handed practice in Chelsea, and a reputation for impeccably detailed notes and referral letters. She always makes her patients laugh – they feel better in her company.

Consultations from £175. Chelsea Outpatient Centre, 280 King's Road, SW3; 07810 405026; drjoy.co.uk

Dr Tim Lebens

Dr Lebens works at the Platinum Medical Centre in St John's Wood, with the finest diagnostic facilities and high-tech equipment at his fingertips. The practice is located within The Wellington Hospital, and patients travel from all over London to see him. He honed his skills as senior partner of an NHS practice in Kensington, and provides an unrivalled level of attentiveness and care.

Consultations from £150. Platinum Medical Centre, 15-17 Lodge Road, NW8; 020 7483 5148; drlebens.com

Dr Safia Debar

For more than a decade, Dr Debar has worked as a GP at the Portobello Clinic, a Notting Hill institution, and is certified by the Harvard Benson-Henry Institute

for her stress management and resiliency programme. She is experienced in hospital medicine and has an academic background, researching cardiovascular risk and bioinformatics. She holds degrees in neuroscience and medicine, plus a master's in public health. *Yearly membership from £350. Portobello Clinic, 12 Raddington Road, W10; 020 8962 0635; portobelloclinic.com*

Dr Willoughby Morgan

Dr Morgan comes from a long line of GPs who hold dear the value of long-term relationships and family-centred care. An independent GP in Chelsea, he has a practice moments from Sloane Square, within a core of consulting rooms owned by the prestigious Lister Hospital. A member of the Royal College of Physicians, he has a diploma in tropical medicine and a reputation for thoroughness and skill, honed during four years as a senior accident and emergency doctor.

Consultations from £125. King-Lewis Family Practice, 2 Lower Sloane Street, SW1; 020 7730 6611; king-lewisfamilypractice.co.uk

Dr Eoin Waters

Dr Waters is a senior partner at Knightsbridge Doctors, a welcoming practice that prides itself on prompt access and thoroughness. An experienced all-rounder, Dr Waters trained in surgery after graduating, then moved to Australia to work in paediatrics and general medicine. He is an expert in orchestrating the care of patients with complex multisystem medical issues.

Consultations from £190. Knightsbridge Doctors, 15 Basil Mansions, Basil Street, SW3; 020 7589 8965; knightsbridge-doctors.com

Dr Daniel Brook

After training at Cambridge and Imperial College London, Dr Brook joined his father, an eminent private GP, in practice▷



WHAT'S UP, DOC?
*Feeling under the weather but
can't cancel? Many private GPs
offer same-day appointments*

◁ at The Brook Surgery in Hampstead, a smart, purpose-built premises. Renowned for his first-class diagnostic skills and caring manner, Dr Brook runs a team of bright, committed GPs offering home visits, health screening, a Saturday-morning clinic and an impressive out-of-hours service.

Consultations from £115. The Brook Surgery, 767 Finchley Road, NW11; 020 7435 0211; thebrooksurgery.com

Dr Rakesh Kapila

Dr Kapila's internationally renowned general practice in South Kensington focuses on pre-emptive healthcare. He completed his GP training at the USA's prestigious Mayo Clinic, and combines the best of the American and British medical systems (sometimes referring patients to the States). He has a particular interest in orthopaedic, cardiovascular and paediatric medicine.

Consultations from £195. South Kensington GP Clinic, 2a Pelham Street, SW7; 020 7591 1300; southkensingtongpclinic.com

Dr Fiona Payne

As a leading GP, Dr Payne believes that a good doctor should understand the pressures on their patients, and always be there when needed to help and guide them. Striving to maintain a holistic view of her patients' needs means she secures the best care available for them, navigating the multiple pathways involved in treatment.

Consultations from £275. GP at London W1, 25 Harley Street, W1; 020 4580 1152; gpatlondonw1.com

Dr Tim Ladbrooke

Dr Ladbrooke founded the Courtfield Private Practice with his wife, Dr Jill Harling. Originally from Norfolk, he qualified at Cambridge and is renowned for maintaining the values of a traditional GP while delivering personal care to the

highest standards – a service underpinned by accessibility and proactive follow-up care. He has also worked as a visiting physician for a hospice, and is experienced in caring for end-of-life patients.

Consultations from £60. Courtfield Private Practice, 73 Courtfield Gardens, SW5; 020 7373 3541; courtfieldpp.co.uk

Dr Martin Saweirs

After many years as a private GP, Dr Saweirs knows that nothing is more frustrating for a patient than not being able to see the same doctor twice. As a result, he prioritises a personal connection with his patients, who reap the benefits of his continuity of care and have the luxury of unhurried appointments in one of Harley Street's most beautiful buildings.

Consultations from £190. 55 Harley Street, W1; 020 3859 6203; drmartingp.com

Dr Ebba Nielsen

Before training as a GP, Dr Nielsen was a highly regarded nurse and this background shines through in her holistic and educational approach to the care of patients. She specialises in the treatment of children and adolescents, as well as expertly attending to the psychological, social and physical wellbeing of adults. Her practice in the heart of Chelsea is an oasis of tranquillity.

Consultations from £195. 102 Sydney Street, SW3; 020 3876 8300; drebbanielsen.co.uk

Dr Patrick Ruane

A graduate of Bristol University, Dr Ruane has a fantastic network of specialists who support his goal of offering outstanding care. He enjoys all areas of general practice, with a specific interest in paediatrics, the care of the elderly and disease prevention. Recently, he has been working with biotechnologists on strategies for coronavirus testing and risk stratification. His Knightsbridge clinic is within the practice started by Lord Hunt of



Fawley, co-founder and later president of the Royal College of General Practitioners.

Consultations from £190. Sloane Street Surgery, Fordie House, 82 Sloane Street, SW1; 020 7245 9333; sloanestreetsurgery.co.uk

Dr Simon Moore

The Moore Medical Practice is one of the largest, most well-established private practices in London. Before practising as a GP, Dr Moore followed a long family tradition by becoming a medical officer in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He has built up a large database of consultants he refers to, all leading experts in their fields, who offer care to all ages. His high-spec premises in Chelsea provide a comfortable setting for patients.

Consultations from £210. Moore Medical Practice, 272 King's Road, SW3; 020 7349 1490; mooremmedicalpractice.co.uk

REST OF THE UK

Dr Carole McAlister

Dr McAlister has 18 years' experience as a private GP, providing accessible, personalised healthcare in a relaxed setting at her practice in Glasgow. Her clinic offers general appointments, medicals, travel medicine, allergy testing and immunotherapy. Her Botox treatments have benefited many migraine sufferers, as well as individuals affected by excessive head and underarm perspiration – and the calm, private setting helps.

Consultations from £80. GP Matters, 7 Barrington Drive, Glasgow; 0141 339 0894; gpmatters.com

Dr Peter Copp

After qualifying at the University of Edinburgh Medical School and stints working in Australia, New Zealand and Bermuda, Dr Copp founded GP-Plus in Edinburgh



PRIVATE LIFE
*These are waiting rooms
you'd want to be seen at*

in response to the need in Scotland for flexible primary care with unhurried appointments. Functional medicine is the cornerstone of his work. He recognises challenging underlying problems and is a master at getting to the bottom of difficult symptoms.

Consultations from £220. GP-Plus, 24 Dundas Street, Edinburgh; 0345 119 6049; gpplus.com

Dr Veronica McBurnie

One of the most accomplished and unusual GPs in medical practice, Dr McBurnie has worked all over the world, from Masai tents to luxury yachts. Earlier this year, she set up an impressive purpose-built practice in Glasgow. She has a keen interest in integrative (therapeutic) medicine and, as well as being an honorary senior lecturer in medicine at Glasgow University, is the club doctor for a professional football team.

Consultations from £150. Westbourne Medical Studios, 20 Lynedoch Crescent, Glasgow; 07967 826149; westbournemedicalstudios.com

Dr Richard Angwin

Dr Angwin used to be a heart surgeon and was about to attain consultant status when he switched specialisms, realising the nature of critical surgery had

withered his diagnostic antennae, and that general medical practice was where his true interest lay. He moved to the independent sector, opening DoctorNow in Beaconsfield. Having honed his skills during his surgical training, Dr Angwin delivers quick and accurate assessments, making his practice a major asset for the local community **Consultations from £135. The Beaconsfield Clinic, Windsor End, Beaconsfield; 01494 410888; doctornow.org**

Dr Claire Gillvray

Dr Gillvray is a top-drawer private GP, who trained in psychiatry before moving to general practice. With a master's degree in sports and exercise medicine, she focuses on the link between physical and mental health. From her extensive multipartner Cambridge practice (located within the Nuffield Private Hospital), Dr Gillvray creates therapy and exercise programmes, helping people gain mental strength through working with the mind, body and breath. She is also a certified personal trainer.

Consultations from £90. Nuffield Health, Cambridge Hospital, 4 Trumpington Road, Cambridge; 01223 631696; nuffieldhealth.com/consultants/dr-claire-gillvray

Dr Simon Glew

Dr Glew is an exceptional clinician, who prides himself on listening and responding to his patients' cues and needs. He has

worked in the south coast and, until this year, in Chelsea. His practice is now based full-time in Hove, East Sussex, where he has established a network of trusted consultants at the forefront of medicine. With a particular interest in paediatrics, psychiatry and sports medicine, he combines attentiveness with investigative skills acquired through a master's degree in medical research.

Consultations from £140. The Hove Practice, 40 Wilbury Road, Hove; 01273 733830; thehovepractice.co.uk

Dr Nic Hillier

Dr Hillier is the principal GP and co-founder of the Walcote Practice in Winchester, Hampshire. After completing his medical studies at Cambridge, he worked as an A&E doctor before providing medical support on expeditions to Belize and Indonesia, and working with the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Western Australia. Dr Hillier believes many elements of care – complex imaging, minor surgery and joint injections – can be brought back into general practice.

Consultations from £95. The Walcote Practice, 37-39 Southgate Street, Winchester; 01962 828715; thewalcoteppractice.co.uk

Dr Vaibhav Verma

Dr Verma is a partner at the Heathcot Medical Practice in Woking, Surrey and also consults in nearby West Byfleet and Sunningdale. After graduating, he completed a masters in surgery with a focus on trauma and orthopaedics, followed by specialist training in plastics and reconstructive surgery. His varied training has equipped him with expertise in musculoskeletal disorders and sports injuries. He also has an interest in dermatology and performs minor surgeries including the removal of moles and cosmetic lesions.

Consultations from £85. York House Medical Centre, Heathside Road, Woking; 07872 580496; heathcotmedicalpractice.nhs.uk □

Doctor's orders

Make sure your chosen GP is a member of the Royal College of General Practitioners – or MRCGP; this qualification is the equivalent of a kitemark

Consider location: however good a recommendation might be, it is not always useful to have a GP in Kensington if you live in the Cotswolds

Be cautious not to get seduced by a glitzy website. Nothing is better than the recommendation of a trusted friend

If your chosen practice has several doctors, avoid being allocated to any who has less than five years' experience in the private, non-NHS sector; they will not yet have a superior portfolio of specialist contacts