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HOW TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT SCHEDULING DOCTOR VISITS ON THE FLY

By Sarah McBride

Scheduling a doctor's appointment online beats dealing with hold times and back-and-forth on the phone, but it also delivers an important social benefit, argues ZocDoc co-founder and CEO Cyrus Massoumi.

Here's how: in coming years, the U.S. will likely have a significant shortfall of doctors— perhaps 125,000 fewer than needed by 2025, estimates the Association of American Medical Colleges, one of several agencies predicting a shortage. Already, wait times to see doctors can range into the months for some specialties or areas of the country.



So if cancelled appointments can be reallocated to another patient rather than going unused, it helps all patients see doctors— and with luck get cured— faster, boosting overall levels of wellness. "It's adding supply to the healthcare pipeline," Massoumi said. (If he sounds more MBA than MD, that's because he is— he holds degrees from Columbia Business School and Wharton, and honed that consultant-speak with a stint at McKinsey.)

His online medical-appointment company allows patients to book visits to doctors' offices at the last minute— often into slots cancelled by others. Almost half of ZocDoc appointments are scheduled within 24 hours, with some patients landing appointments just hours ahead of time.

Finding a way to use what would otherwise become wasted time helped land ZocDoc \$95 million in venture backing from firms including DST Global, Goldman Sachs and Khosla Ventures. The firm is using that cash to expand into more cities—Seattle launched Monday—bringing its total to 14. In the next 18 months, ZocDoc hopes to cover the whole country, Massoumi said.

Participating doctors pay \$250 a month for the service.