***Dr. Higgins Remote Concierge Medicine***

Dear Patients:

Our world is changing. We all see advantages and disadvantages of internet access and electronic media to assist us in our daily lives, as well as with our healthcare. The healthcare world is also changing with an aging physician population, a shortage of physicians and increasing barriers in obtaining quality medical care. The changes with healthcare insurance reform have frequently negatively impacted this goal for quality care. Thus, the team at Cardiac Arrhythmia Associates have devised a “new world” opportunity to receive medical care which we call ***Remote Concierge Medicine***.

SUMMARY: While spelled out in detail below, here is a quick overview in one paragraph: After September 1, 2019, to continue to see Dr. Higgins, you will need to sign up for this Remote Concierge program. You will continue to see him in the office by a remote telemedicine approach on a large screen with other tests done in the office as before, such as an EKG. You will continue to have the same or better access to Dr. Higgins, including decision making care for your medical, cardiology and cardiac electrophysiology needs, including implanted device (pacemaker, defibrillator) care. Once enrolled, you will have direct access to Dr. Higgins by email or cell-phone. There is a charge of $2500 annually and $250 per visit for this service. To enroll, you must read through this letter and the attached documents, sign them and return payment. Your appointments will then be scheduled with Dr. Higgins.

BACKGROUND from Dr. Higgins: I turned 65 last year and have had some personal health problems, mostly arthritis related, partly attributed to nearly 40 years of wearing lead aprons and doing surgery. My friends and patients are aging as well so I have recognized the need to enjoy my “golden years.” My wife, Sue, and I have found a lovely golf community outside Hilton Head, South Carolina where we will call home September 1 with infrequent return trips to San Diego. Yet, I don’t want to completely retire. I truly enjoy seeing patients and practicing cardiac electrophysiology. I am proud of the Scripps EP program we have created; it is now the largest EP program west of the Mississippi that I am honored to have directed for 34 years. I believe this has helped many thousands to “Live Better Electrically.”

CONCIERGE MEDICINE: As outlined in the attached documents, concierge medicine in growing in interest. It is designed to address the concerns noted above related to challenges getting proper medical care. Just in north county, there are over 100 physicians providing concierge care, both specialists (such as Drs. Rapeport and Charlat) and primary care. We are offering a less common variation of providing concierge care *remotely* during your office visit. Unfortunately, Medicare and other insurers pay for remote telemedicine visits only if the patient and doctor are both located in rural sites, not our La Jolla office. Thus, to make this work, the office visit and telemedicine consultation must be a cash out-of-pocket transaction.

SERVICES: Similar to the old practice model, you will have a scheduled appointment in Dr. Higgins office at 9850 Genesee, Suite 940, La Jolla. Two rooms have been outfitted for the remote telemedicine visits. After your check-in with a medical assistant, vital signs and EKG, you will be seen. Device patients will have their implanted pacemaker or defibrillator interrogated and reprogrammed as appropriate under physician direction. Then, you and Dr. Higgins will converse via a large screen iPad setup. As before, he encourages you to bring family members or care-givers to these visits. He will have access to your medical record, Geneva remote transmissions and other information. You will be given plenty of time to discuss active medical problems and create a care plan. Written instructions and informational handouts will be provided. Typically, you will be seen as before, every 6 months. Time is also available for add-on visits if needed for acute or active issues. Your visit will be documented in the EPIC medical record system and shared with your other physicians. You will have access to these notes online via the My Scripps care portal or you can be provided a written copy.

ADVANCED CARE: Of course, not all medicine can be practiced remotely. Whether you need hospitalization or just a treadmill procedure, Dr. Higgins will refer you to other physicians who can provide direct care. Most commonly, this will be his partners, Drs. David Cohen or G. Stuart Mendenhall. Dr. Higgins will refer you to other specialists as may be needed. Some office procedures, such as an echocardiogram or event monitor rhythm review will still be interpreted by Dr. Higgins and the results shared with you.

EMERGENCIES and CALL: As before, if you have a medical emergency, dial 911 and if safe, ask that you be transported to Scripps Memorial Hospital emergency room. Dr. Higgins partners, Drs. Cohen and Mendenhall can see you in the ER or hospital. Dr. Higgins may check in with you by telephone as well. However, he will no longer take direct after-hour calls for emergencies. For non-emergent issues, Dr. Higgins will remain available to you. With the remote concierge program, you will have specialized access via email, cell phone or texting for your medical questions. Please do not use this method for true emergency care. For routine office issues, use the office phone number (858) 658-0088 as before.

CONTACTS: With nearly 35 years of practicing medicine in La Jolla, Dr. Higgins knows Scripps Health inside and out. He will continue to maintain his relationships with the many fine physicians in our community. When or if you are ever in need of referral or expedited care, he will help you get the best care available.

HOME CARE: Presently, we are *not* planning to provide this type of remote concierge medicine from you in your home, using services such as Skype or Facetime on your own phone. To get proper care, it is still important for you to come to the office for an EKG, vital signs, examination and other testing. Of course, Dr. Higgins will be available for questions by phone or email from your home for non-emergent issues not requiring an office visit.

LIMITED NUMBER: Although Dr. Higgins has cared for tens of thousands of patients in his career, he currently actively provides care for about 2000 annually. To make sure he can give specialized care to the Remote Concierge group, he is limiting this program to just 200 on a first-come, first-served basis. We will do our best to accommodate any who may be on a waiting list.

CHARGES: Charges for concierge medicine vary substantially. In New York city, some concierge physicians are charging $40,000-80,000 annually! Most local concierge practices charge an annual fee of $3500-6000 for this care plus added costs, including insurance charges.

For Dr. Higgins Remote Concierge practice, the current annual fee is **$2500** payable in advance. In addition, scheduled office appointments will be charged an additional **$250** per visit to cover the telemedicine aspects of your care. Insurance will not be billed for the consultation or office visit portion of your care though you retain the option to submit this charge for insurance reimbursement. Other insurance covered services performed in the office, such as an EKG, echocardiogram, event monitor and other care will be billed to you and your health insurance as before. Thus, you may still have additional out-of-pocket expenses associated with these visits, such as copays and deductibles. Please see the separate page on charges and duration of services provided.

OPTIONS: As outlined in my original letter, this remote concierge option is not for all of you. If after reading through this information you decide to NOT enroll, you still have options for your care:

1. Transferring your EP care to either Dr. Cohen or Mendenhall at our La Jolla office.
2. Transferring your care to another physician with a subsequent record forwarding.
3. Discussing options further with Dr. Higgins or our office staff, (858) 658-0088.

We hope this and the attached documents in the packet address your questions and concerns. The staff and Dr. Higgins remain available if you have questions or needs. To complete the registration:

1. Read through the packet of information.
2. Sign the attached **Remote Concierge Consent Form** and RETURN.
3. Fill out the **payment voucher** either providing a check or credit card number for charging and RETURN by mail in the envelope provided.
4. Make sure that Cardiac Arrhythmia Associates has up-to-date insurance information, HIPPA authorization, consents for care, and authorization to release medical records. These will be reviewed at your next office visit.
5. Once completed, you will receive a receipt, acknowledgment and autographed copy of Dr. Higgins book, *Live Better Electrically*.
6. Your first office visits will be scheduled by phone or you can call (858) 658-0088.
7. Please keep this packet and your signed returned copies for future reference.

Thank you for embarking on this new chapter of your healthcare. And LIVE BETTER ELECTRICALLY!

Steven L. Higgins, MD, FHRS