MD Life

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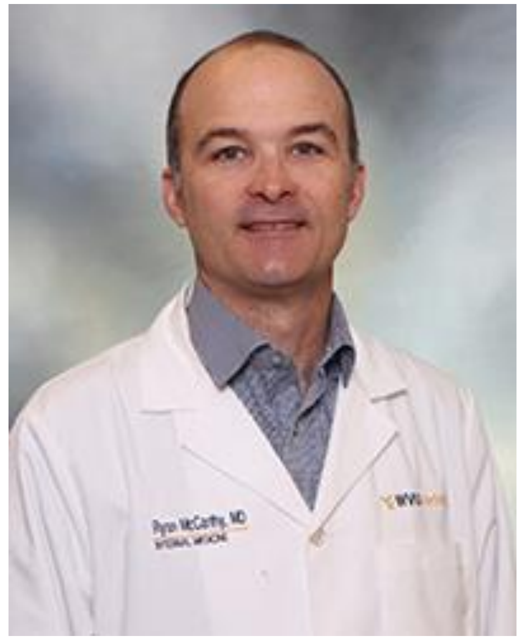
When This Doctor Gets A Zero Star Rating

Ryan McCarthy, MD



I can't stop thinking about "customer satisfaction," which is weird because I don't actually have customers. I'm a primary care doctor for a group of patients in Martinsburg, WV, and have done so for almost twenty years. At its core, my job is the opposite of having it your way, like I'm told you can do at Burger King.

I don't sell anything in my office except, perhaps, the benefits of good health. The medications I prescribe cannot be requested and are not for sale. I used to work in retail, so I know the dynamics of making customers happy and the practices of up-selling. I don't offer fries or a large drink with that. I do, however, often pitch, "Would you like a flu shot while you're here?" A statement that demonstrates my promotion of health and my lack of desire to please people.

In fact, I often tell patients which products they shouldn't buy or use. I frequently deny requests for medication or tests, as they are often inappropriate, a waste of time and money, and some of them are risky. Patients tell me stories of their illness with the belief that certain treatments are needed to make them better. After listening and examining them, I often dash these desires. On my best days, I do this gently and with compassion. I present other options, or, more accurately, an actual plan, not a DIY internet recipe. With a wealth of experience, I have a lot to offer my patients, and it's a joy to do so.

Giving patients good advice is my primary goal, which seems obvious, but, in an age of mistrust, we need to return to first principles. In order to help my patients I must ask probing questions and then perform, when needed, an invasive examination. Under ideal circumstances, I do this with sensitivity and tact. But, make no mistake, baring one's self, figuratively and literally, the more you show and tell me, the more I can help. I genuinely try to respect the awkwardness and power imbalance inherent in this relationship.

This dynamics of me asking patients "nosey" questions and simultaneously not doing exactly what patients want is why I am ruminating over "customer satisfaction." My patients—they will never be customers—receive an electronic survey after their office visit. You likely have taken one, and make no mistake, these "things" are now a permanent fixture in the American health care "system." Their existence is simultaneously hilarious and galling to me, for reasons that increasingly sit in the forefront of my mind.

Not that long ago, a member of management, a "quality manager," discussed with me how a group of my patients gave me low, and I mean low, ratings: zero stars. At the time, about 3 percent of respondents were truly upset about the health care I provided them. And, after a great deal of reflection, I want to explain why these particular zero-star reviews are a point of professional pride. Not shame. Not misunderstanding. Not an opportunity for improvement—pride.

How is that possible? A hallmark of primary care is that the next patient can bring me any kind of concern. And—boy oh, boy—they do just that. I care for sprained ankles, poison ivy, diabetes, asthma, obesity, high blood pressure, depression, prevention services, I could keep going. This diversity is why I love internal medicine. So many of these situations are straightforward, but underneath lurk darker things, like patients trying to file an illegitimate disability claim, obtaining narcotic pain medication, or stimulants. I am often begged for inappropriate accommodation in the workplace or school setting, so someone can personally benefit.

In a nutshell, I am often asked—begged, chided, cried to—to do medically wrong things. It's a small percentage of patients, but it is consistent and real. It's also why some people give me, deservedly, zero stars.

It's a judgment call about where legitimate care ends and the bogus claims and fraud begin. But, after all of these years, I trust my gut when things smell fishy and patients' stories don't make sense. My guess is that one in every thirty patients, about three percent, are trying to get something from me. When confronted by this behavior, I have a couple of choices. I can accommodate these requests and turn myself into a medical equivalent of a candy store, where patients receive the treats they want. I've witnessed this behavior in my career, and it makes my blood boil.

The other choice is for me to be courageous, a good steward of public resources, medical funds, and use of limited tests. This requires me to say no and have firm boundaries, and it means that I must accept that there are zero stars. When patients do this, they indicate their dissatisfaction with their care—not a problem. Turns out, I feel the same way.

Ryan McCarthy is an internal medicine physician.

LinkedIn Features You Should Start Using

BY KIM KOMANDO, KOMANDO.COM

LinkedIn is one of the biggest social media sites for professionals. If you want to reconnect with old coworkers or find new jobs, it's the place to be. Users love its many features, especially the profile page you can use to brag about your accomplishments.

There are a few tips and tricks you might have no idea about. Here are five features you can start using to your advantage today.

1. Use Sales Navigator to reach more people

This is a must-have tool for all of your outreach needs. Many of us struggle to find new clients and connect with big players in our industry. If you're dealing with outdated information and need a leg up, check out **LinkedIn Sales Navigator**.

It lets you find new opportunities and even strengthen your existing customer relationships. Its powerful advanced search capabilities let you find exactly what you want. You can use filters like industry, geography, customer size and more.

2. Save searches and get notified when there are updates

Speaking of filters, here's an easy way to find good job prospects. You connect with the right people through LinkedIn's saved searches and job alerts. If you want to keep track of your findings, save the search.

This way, even if you have a lot on your plate and get distracted by other tasks, you can pick up your search later. You can also get notifications whenever there's an update in your search parameters. Here's how.

Say you found someone through the **People tab** or **Jobs tab**. On the right-hand side of the search page, press **Create search alert**. Then, save your preferences by hitting **Save**. Just like that, you saved your search and will get helpful notifications in the future.

3. Use Boolean searches for better results

We've got you covered if you have never heard of a Boolean expression. It's an expression that a programming language uses to produce specific values.

That's some pretty complex computer-speak, so let's put it in the context of a search engine. A Boolean search combines words, phrases and symbols to limit or define your search results.

Let's say you want to find results for a job with two words in the title, like an art director. Your search results may include other types of directors. To ensure you only see that specific phrase, use quotation marks like "Art director."

Boolean operators also include the words “AND,” “OR” and “NOT.” If there’s a specific company you dream of working for, try using “AND.” So, for example, an art director who longs for a Dreamworks job would type this into the search bar: “art director” AND Dreamworks.

4. Start a professional blog

One great way to show off your professional chops is by creating and sharing helpful content on LinkedIn. That’s right: There are many ways to use its features to spread your ideas. You can do this through status updates or insightful comments on related posts.

Its editor lets you post articles on the front of your profile. It’s a lot like a blog. This is a great way to impress potential employers.

Of course, you don’t have to create original content just for this site. If you write long, thoughtful posts on Instagram or Facebook, you can adjust them to suit the professional world of LinkedIn and then share them on your page. Many people don’t even know this, so you’ll automatically stand out compared to the competition if you start doing this.

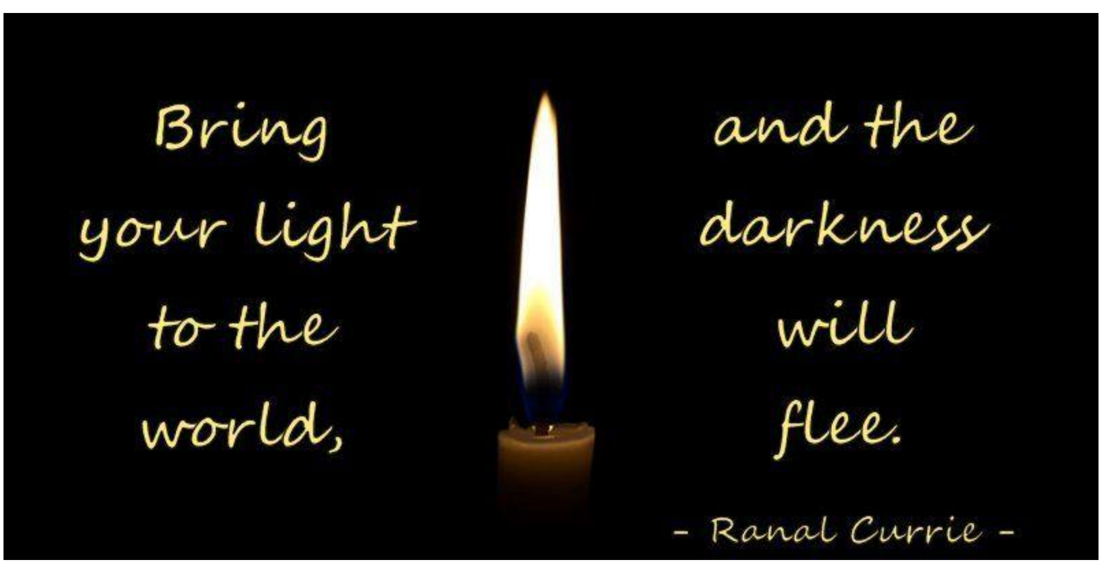
5. This trick lets you see how your posts are performing

If you decide to post content on LinkedIn, you may want to see whether or not they’re successful. That way, you can figure out what you’re doing right and wrong. This also helps you come up with more successful strategies.

You can see which people looked over your post, including their job titles and city. The feature is so refined it even tells you if your readers were first or second-degree connections. Even better, the analytics window offers suggestions.

Employers: Here’s another way to use LinkedIn

Small businesses have unique needs, and it’s more important than ever to have the right people on your team. That’s why we trust LinkedIn Jobs to help. LinkedIn Jobs matches your open role with qualified candidates and puts your post in front of members every day so you can hire the right person faster.



How a Simple Chore Transformed My Perspective on Medicine

CHRISTINE MARIE DEETHS, MD

My son was born in a small community hospital with breathing and heart issues requiring transfer to a children's hospital several hundred miles away. I arrived at the children's hospital, worried, exhausted, and overwhelmed many hours after he did. Everything had happened so quickly my head was spinning.

After I checked on my son, I was directed to the Ronald McDonald house. I arrived in the wee hours of the morning and checked into my room. I was incredibly grateful for a bed and a quiet space after the chaos and stress of the prior hours.

In the morning, the manager on duty gave me a list of the rules and policies of the house. There was no charge to families, each was expected to do a household chore daily. My chore was to vacuum the common spaces. I remember feeling this was an incredible burden and being very annoyed. How could I vacuum when my baby was critically ill? Why would anyone expect a parent to spend an unnecessary moment away from their ill baby, especially for vacuuming?

At breakfast that morning, I looked around at all the other families wondering what tragedy had befallen their family. I noticed no one else was complaining about their chores, they were quietly doing them and moving on with their days. Watching them, I decided I should get my chores done and move on to the most important part of my day.

I found the vacuum and plugged it in, and then I started vacuuming. Moving the heavy, industrial-sized vacuum cleaner back and forth across the well-worn common carpet. While I was vacuuming, I realized something VERY important. A lesson that has, in many ways, shaped the kind of parent and physician I am.

While I was vacuuming, I realized that this was the first time in days that I had done something "normal." This was the first time that I slowed down and had a moment with myself where I was not pulled in a thousand directions at once. For those 5 minutes, I did something that every other mother in America did: I vacuumed. I was not a mom with a critically ill newborn, I was not fighting for his life, I was not advocating for him with doctors and nurses. I was not living in a crisis. I was vacuuming.

At that moment, I stepped back into the real world. I relaxed. I calmed down. I refocused. I did something that was not about me. It was not about my son. It was not about surviving. It was just vacuuming.

I spent the rest of the day listening to the doctors and their plan, how bad his heart function was, signs of a brain injury, sepsis, IV antibiotics, and respiratory distress. So many things wrong. So many things to fix.

After an insanely long day, I stumbled back to my room to sleep. The next morning, I got up and vacuumed. Every day my son got a little better. I eventually brought him “home” to the Ronald McDonald house and packed him up for the voyage to our house the next day … after holding him while vacuuming the living room for one last time.

Last week as I was vacuuming my office while my residents sat around a table, I remembered the lesson of the vacuum and shared it with them.

As physicians, we often meet people on their very worst days, in their worst moments, in their crises. We sometimes forget what that feels like to them. For us, it is mundane, it is part of our day. We don’t see the shreds of what used to be a normal life, torn to bits by whatever event caused their lives to intersect with ours. We need to remember that they long to be normal to have their lives back, to return to their yesterday.

The hospital is not unlike a vacuum, patients are stripped of normal. Their normality sucked away. We set their schedule, waking them at whatever hour works in our schedules. They are stripped of their clothing and belongings. They are listening to strange sounds: people moaning, cries of anguish, hearing suffering, IVs beeping, and monitors blaring—all unfamiliar and distressing. To us, they are the background music of our lives, to patients it is foreign and disturbing, even disorienting.

They have lost their sense of humanity. Machines are replacing basic, fundamental bodily functions. They rely on someone to help them toilet, they need to eat on a rigid schedule. They have NO control over the pace or timing of their day, their independence has been stripped away.

Medicine has become incredibly impersonal; little of it takes place at the bedside anymore. Patients are left isolated and alone for hours at a time, waiting for someone to respond to the call light. Visitors are restricted. Staff is often masked and gowned, patients don’t always even see a friendly face or smile. With the advent of EMR and MyChart, patients no longer even need actually to see a doctor; they can find out exactly what we are thinking or saying from open notes and often know their results before we do. While convenient and easy this has further dehumanized the process.

Our patients do not live in a vacuum, with the rest of their lives emptied out into blackness when they are ill. The rest of their lives go on, no matter where they are. They still have bills, kids, spouses, jobs, the list goes on.

Our job, as their physicians, is not just to care for them physically but also to address their humanity, to remind them that we do care. We need to give them back some normal when the world is conspiring to take it away.

We need to remember to take a minute, to stop, to do the mundane, to ask a question about them, not their health. Give them a small movement of normal and suck them back out of the vacuum.

Christine Marie Deeths *is a family physician.*

PHYSICIAN FINANCIAL CHECKLIST FOR 2024

by The Motivated M.D.

I cannot believe I am saying this, but it is already that time of year again to prepare for the new year! It is cliché to say, but the year does fly by. Between the Christmas holiday and the New Year, I tend to begin to get my 'financial house' in order. With 2024 around the corner, I created an article reflecting some of the essential things on my financial checklist. This list is not comprehensive but targets some of the most important tasks to complete each year. So get your 'To-do' list ready because here is the Physician Financial Checklist for 2024. Enjoy!

1. Review Your Financial Plan

This may seem like a no-brainer, but for many, it isn't. Most people believe preparing your budget is the first step in tackling the new year. With this post, I wish to argue that, nay, it is circling back to your financial plan.

See, it is critical that each individual or couple have a financial plan that outlines how they will prioritize their spending, savings, investments, debt repayments, etc. My wife and I wrote our own a while back and shared it here on the site. You can find it here on How to Write a Financial Plan. It is a comprehensive guide on creating your financial plan using ours as an example.

If you already have an established financial plan, perfect. That makes this part easy. Start the new year by reviewing your plan so that as you progress to 'budget preparedness', your plan is reflected in how you allocate your money.

If you do not have a financial plan, stop here, go no further, and create one now. This is vital for your current and future success. A well-written financial plan acts as a roadmap for your expenses and savings.

2. Prepare Your Budget

OK, now that you have reviewed your financial plan, it is time to tackle the budget for 2024. If you do not have a budget, subscribe to our newsletter, and I will send you a FREE Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet budget that I have created. This is the same budget that I use to manage our household.

Generally, I started with my fixed expenses (i.e., mortgage payment, childcare, utilities, etc.). From here, I review the prior year's budget and update it accordingly. Did we get a pay raise? Did our insurance premiums increase? How much can I reasonably put towards student loans this year? These are the questions I often ask myself to have my budget reflect my values without putting myself in the red.

Make sure your budget is comprehensive, thorough, detailed, and overwhelmingly reflects where your expenses are going. A well-prepared budget can help you enter the new year with a sense of ownership of your income and expenses.

3. Replenish Your Emergency Fund
Anyone who regularly reads our site knows I always jump at an opportunity to discuss our emergency fund. This article is no different.

An emergency fund is a cornerstone of financial security. Having an easily accessible fund of money to help guard against unexpected expenses is a must. I generally advocate for physicians to keep *at least* three months of living expenses and then build from there based on their comfort level. When I write 'living expenses,' I mean *everything*. Generally, this means going back and reviewing your budget for the past six to twelve months, determining all the expenses you average over three months, and keeping a fund with that amount that is rarely touched, except for emergencies.

However, it is important to know that times will arise when this fund should be used. Unexpected damages to your home, urgent need for A/C repair or replacement, a new car, unemployment, etc. These all constitute emergencies. These, too, are not uncommon. As such, you may use a portion of your emergency fund each year. Following its use, it should be prioritized to replenish what was used. This is easier said than done.

The new year can be a great time to replenish your emergency fund. For those who feel three months of living expenses is insufficient, the new year can be a great time to increase the budget further. No matter your comfort level, an emergency fund is always essential.

4. Review Your Student Loan Repayment Plan
This is always an important part of the annual checklist. With so much information out there recommending pursuing Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), refinancing, etc. Where is one to begin? Your loan repayment plan is already set in stone for many of you. No matter your loan repayment plan, the new year is a great time to double-check the details.

As most in the physician finance niche will advocate, you should always consider pursuing PSLF first and foremost before you decide to pursue anything else. I advocate for this, as does Physician on Fire, The White Coat Investor, Student Loan Advice, and many more in the field. However, even if you are already well into your loan repayment process with PSLF, the new year is as good of a time as any to check in and make sure you remain in the correct repayment plan, consider the new SAVE plan, and that all payments are certified payments that contribute to your 120 required monthly payments.

For those who are not pursuing PSLF and are rapidly paying down their debt, the new year is also an excellent time for you also! Since you will already be reviewing and updating your annual budget, use this momentum to see how much more you can put toward your debt. Can you modify your expenses to optimize your debt elimination? No matter what you are doing about your loans, the new year is a great time to reevaluate, reflect, double-check, and confirm. If you need a bit of motivation, check out our latest update on our loan repayment progress!

5. Get the Employer Retirement Contribution Match
This one always makes the list. Why? Because you are leaving money on the table if you do not prioritize contributing enough to reach the employer retirement contribution match. This amount likely varies between employers, but generally ranges between 5-9%. This means that if you contribute this amount to your employer's retirement plan, the employer will contribute a portion of *their* money to *your* retirement account.

In simpler terms, *you* will get paid to save for *your* retirement. This is a no-brainer! It should always be a top priority. Even before we advocate for maxing out your retirement contributions (and we will), you should always ensure you are getting every free penny offered. If you are still determining if you are meeting the minimum requirement to receive the match, often you can log into your retirement account online or contact the human resources officer at your respective employer. They help you navigate the process of increasing your contribution.

6. Max Out Retirement Savings

After you confirm you are contributing enough to receive the employer match, the next step is to max out your retirement contribution completely. This will largely increase each year, and for individuals over 50, there is often a 'catch-up' contribution that can be made to expedite your retirement savings. To the best of my knowledge, here are the updated retirement contribution maximums for 2024:

- 401(k) contribution limit: $23,000
- 401(k) catch-up contribution limit: $30,500 (for ages 50+)
- 403(b) contribution limit: $23,000
- 403(b) catch-up contribution limit: $30,500 (for ages 50+)
- 401(k)/403(b)/401(a) total contribution limit: $69,000
- 401(k)/403(b)/401(a) catch-up contribution limit: $76,500 (for ages 50+)
- 457(b) contribution limit: $23,000
- 457(b) catch-up contribution limit: unique rules, consult your plan administrator
- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contribution limit: $23,000
- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) catch-up contribution limit: $30,500 (for ages 50+)

Use the new year to make sure your retirement contributions reflect the new maximum limits for 2024.

7. Max Out Healthcare Spending Account (HSA) Savings

Maxing out your HSA is another crucial financial priority as you enter 2024. For those primarily with High-Deductible Health Plans (HDHP), you are generally offered an HSA. These are great because their savings roll over year after year. Further, suppose you do not spend the money you save in your HSA or plan not to spend it. In that case, you can use it as a Stealth IRA and make penalty-free withdrawals once you are over 65.

Maxing out your HSA contribution is an integral part of the 2024 checklist. The maximum contribution limits for an HSA for 2024 are as follows:

Single HSA contribution limits: $4,150
- Family HSA contribution limits: $8,300
- HSA catch-up contribution limits: $1,000 (for ages 55+)

Want more information about HSAs? The White Coat Investor has previously written a great article called 7 Reasons an HSA Should Be Your Favorite Investing Account, and it highlights all the ways an HSA is a strategic investment.

8. Complete Backdoor Roth IRA Contributions

The new year can be a great time to get your backdoor Roth IRA out of the way. For those who have never completed a backdoor Roth IRA, I created a simple guide called How to Do a Backdoor Roth IRA Conversion.

Put simply, high-income earners can often not contribute to a Roth IRA directly. However, you can put money into a traditional IRA and then convert it to a Roth IRA. It is often recommended to complete this conversion quickly before any interest accumulates in the traditional IRA account to avoid the 'pro rata' rule.

For 2024, the backdoor Roth IRA contribution limits are $7,000 (i.e., put $7,000 in a traditional IRA and then convert to a Roth IRA). If you wish to learn more, check out the article linked above. Backdoor Roth IRAs are a great after-tax investment vehicle for high-income earners to save and withdraw tax-free in retirement (because you were already taxed).

9. Save Monthly for The Holidays
I don't know about you, but this time of year always weighs heavy on the budget. Though my wife and I have a sound approach to holiday expenses, they seem more expensive each year. One of the first articles I published on this website was about how we save throughout the year for the holidays. This means that when the gifting season arrives, we have money set aside to prevent impacts on our monthly budget. If you wish to reach that article, follow the link here!

However, to summarize briefly, we put aside enough monthly to pay for all the 'other' expenses that creep up around the turn of the year. Here are a few examples:

- Holiday gifting
- Christmas cards
- Homeowners Association Dues
- Our annual insurance premiums (life, disability, umbrella, etc.)
- Annual bonus for our childcare

We retroactively reviewed our expenses the year prior and planned accordingly. We divide the amount we expect to spend during the holidays (including all above expenses) over twelve months. My wife and I contribute this amount to our 'Holiday Fund' monthly. This way, we can sleep soundly, knowing that our regular monthly budget will not be impacted by the excess spending this season seems to always bring.

I encourage everyone to approach big expenses or holiday spending this way. It allows you to know you are covered when gift-giving begins.

10. Create Achievable Financial Goals
Last but certainly not least, we should all create goals for the year. Whether large or small, goal setting is a crucial way to stay motivated and remain focused. If we set too lofty goals, we will likely set ourselves up for defeat. This deflation can hinder progress.

As you enter the new year, consider what you can achieve. Create a portion of your financial plan or budget that houses your financial goals for 2024. Return to the list as you accomplish these goals. Crossing a goal off the list as 'completed' can be a healthy boost of motivation and even a reason to celebrate. Maybe your goals entail some financial strategies mentioned above, like maxing out your retirement contributions, eliminating debt, or saving for the holidays. Perhaps they involve charitable giving or travel. No matter what your goals are for the new year, set realistic, achievable goals to keep that financial momentum going in the right direction!

Take Home Points
The new year brings in a metaphorical 'clean slate.' We feel revitalized to tackle what the new year brings. This often applies to our physical and mental health, career, and relationships. However, it can also be a time to get our financial affairs in order. Ring in 2024 with your budget prepared, your retirement savings maxed, and your financial stress at ease. Cheers and Happy New Year! As always…

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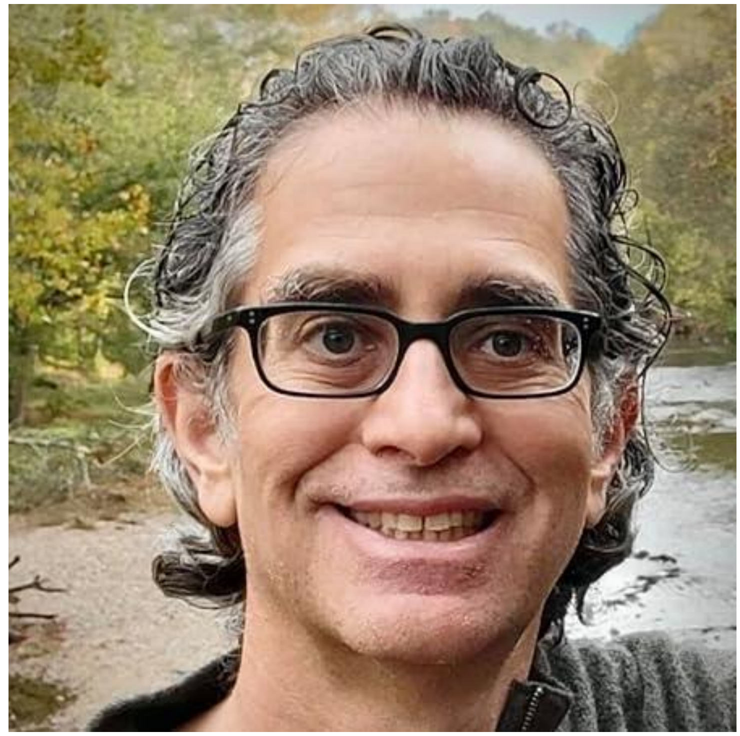
Heart-Stopping Brain Surgery: A Surgeon's Harrowing Dilemma

MARC ARGINTEANU, MD



The epicenter of Jane's cancer occupied some very expensive real estate between Broca's area and the motor strip. Her ability to speak and form coherent words resided in Broca's. A little further back was the Motor Strip, which controlled the movement of the right side of her body.

It all looks the same … so damned normal. Mike cleared his throat. High-price real estate. The spasmed muscles in his shoulders and neck felt as if they would rip him in half. If he made the brain cut too far back, he'd paralyze her. Too far forward, he'd wreck her … she'd never be able to speak or understand a word anyone said to her.

Mike rolled his shoulders, grunted, and chose a spot in the surface, the perfectly normal-looking surface, of Jane's brain. He buzzed through the innermost membrane, the glistening, transparent pia, which clung to the brain's surface like Saran Wrap. He cauterized half a dozen tiny vessels, each not much wider than a hair, which crossed the cortex.

He cut into the tan-colored grey matter with micro-scissors. He stretched his arm backward. Without a word, Val took the scissors and placed narrow steel spatulas in each of his hands. He tunneled, millimeter by millimeter, through the grey, digging into the snow-white brain substance, the axonal cables.

I don't see any tumor yet, Mike thought. Am I digging too deep? His mouth went dry. Am I heading in the wrong direction? His heart pounded in his ears. Am I going to wreck Jane's brain? He said, "Steady now, Mike." He breathed deeply and slowly. "You can't throw in the towel." In through the nose. Out through the mouth.

Mike spread a thin veil of snow-white fibers. There it was: a purplish mass as ugly as Medusa's head. The last vestige of hope (the tumor might not be malignant; the intraoperative appearance might not be awful) evaporated. He groaned.

He bit the angry tumor with cupped forceps. Blood seeped from the raw surface as if from a wounded animal. He relentlessly buzzed and sucked and cut the beast, not giving it a chance to bite him back. The tumor's texture, like the color, was distinct from the surrounding white matter. The tumor was stringy and grainy. The surrounding brain, infiltrated by invisible cancer cells, was like a custard.

“Specimen for the pathologist,” Mike said. He handed a pulpy lump of tumor, the color of plum pudding, to Val.

“Frozen or permanent?” She asked.

“Permanent,” he said. Frozen was quicker. Permanent was more accurate. “Knowing the cell type won’t change today’s surgery,” he explained. “Better to let the pathologist take her time and do all her special stains.”

The monster’s bleeding became more vigorous and the color of the blood changed from Beaujolais to cherry-red. “Oh, no you don’t.”

Val leaned as close to him as sterility would allow. She couldn’t tell whether his grumbles meant he needed anything from her.

“Crank the Malis up.”

Joanny increased the settings on the coagulator and Mike buzzed the bleeders, turning them into black char.

“Cupped forceps,” he said. The consistency of the remaining cancer was tougher, as if the strings and grains had weaved together into a shaggy rug. Mike tugged at the beast, “You bastard.” Mike tugged a little harder. Just a touch. The normal brain surrounding the tumor shifted and swelled. If he tugged too hard, he’d be liable to damage a faraway, unseen brain structure.

Mike handed Val the forceps. His unblinking eyes felt like sandpaper. “Gustino,” he said.

Val handed him the Sonopet, the latest weapon in Mike’s never-ending fight. The long, slender tool removed cancer without him needing to tug. It dissolved the tumor by ultrasound and sucked away the liquefied cells. Mike called it the ‘Gustino’ in honor of his friends, Paul and Kelly, who’d donated the funds for its purchase.

“Finally,” he said. The visible and palpable tumor was gone, and a glistening, snow-white cavern remained. But his aching shoulders and cramped hands didn’t relax. Did I take enough out?

“Magic wand,” he said.

He brought the magic wand into the operative site to compare what he saw inside Jane’s head to what the stereotactic guidance system told him.

He looked up at a blank screen.

“Joanny.” He stomped his foot. “The screen.”

Joanny moved the sensor, as she’d done previously, to no avail.

"Is everyone trying to sabotage my surgery?"

"You've got crud on your balls, doctor," Val noted. They would all laugh at that line a few hours hence. In a few months, it would become a classic. No one found it funny at that moment. Val was right, as always. Mike's balls, spherical fiducials, were splattered with thick drops of opaque blood, which impeded the infrared rays.

"Well. Clean them," he barked.

Val wiped down Mike's balls. As if by magic, the image returned and the computer indicated that Mike had completely resected the grossly visible tumor. But he knew there was an invisible army of microscopic cells, feathering out from the blue glob of paint, invading the normal white paint bucket of Jane's brain.

Mike entered the toughest round of this fight. The one against himself.

Should I call it quits and close up?

It was definitely a gross total.

But the margins … should I go for broke?

He couldn't get out every drop of blue paint. The glob was hopelessly intermixed, spreading far and wide into the bucket of white paint.

I could get rid of some of that sky-blue.

If he went much further, he'd leave this beautiful, vibrant girl stroked out or, even worse, a vegetable.

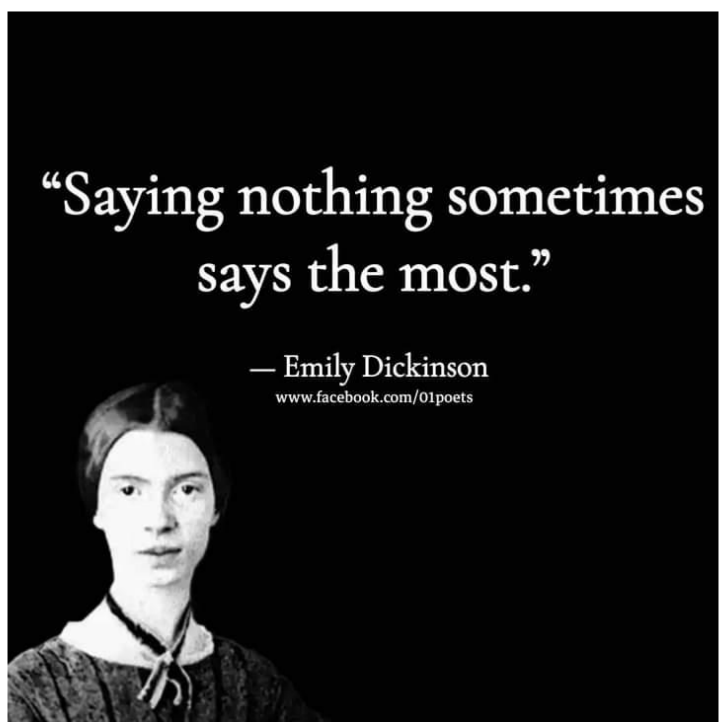
Just a touch?

He could make the post-op MRI look as clean as a whistle. All his neurosurgical colleagues would be in awe of the scans.

I'm taking care of Jane, not her damned MRI.

"We're closing up," Mike said.

Marc Arginteanu is a neurosurgeon and author of Azazel's Public House and of Paint and Pancakes.



HEALTHY MAKE-AHEAD BREAKFAST BURRITOS

thefoodiephysician.com

These Healthy Make-Ahead Breakfast Burritos are the perfect nutritious breakfast for busy weekday mornings! I wrap fluffy scrambled eggs, a savory sweet potato hash, smashed avocados, and cheddar cheese in soft whole grain tortillas. Make a batch of these tasty burritos on the weekend and then heat one up on your way out the door during the week. Breakfast is ready in 30 seconds!

WHY YOU'LL LOVE THIS DISH

- **They're delicious**- the combination of fluffy eggs, smoky sweet potato hash and creamy avocado will make your taste buds sing
- **They're satisfying**- the combination of complex carbs, protein, fiber, and healthy fat will keep you feeling full and satisfied all morning

- **They're nutritious**- these healthy breakfast burritos are packed with nutrient-dense ingredients
- **You can make them ahead**- make a big batch of these burritos and then store them in the fridge or freezer- perfect for meal prep!

INGREDIENTS

These *Healthy Make-Ahead Breakfast Burritos* are **packed with nutritious ingredients** including:

- **Eggs**- eggs are low in calories and high in protein. Plus they're packed with many vitamins, minerals, and disease-fighting compounds like lutein, zeaxanthin, and choline. Eggs are one of the few foods that contain naturally high amounts of vitamin D (found in the yolk). Learn how to make perfect poached eggs or try my zucchini and corn frittata, a delicious breakfast dish featuring eggs and fresh veggies.

- **Sweet potatoes**- sweet potatoes are true superfoods and are packed with several vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants! These include vitamin A, vitamin C, B vitamins, potassium and manganese. Sweet potatoes are also a rich source of fiber, which is important for digestive health and helps keep you feeling full for a long time. Fiber also helps reduce blood cholesterol levels, regulates blood sugar, and may lower the risk of heart disease. Try my savory twice-baked sweet potatoes or sweet potato shepherd's pie.

- **Avocados**- another superfood! This healthy fruit (yes, avocado is a fruit, not a vegetable) is packed with beneficial nutrients nearly 20 vitamins, minerals, and health-promoting phytonutrients! Avocados provide a healthy amount of good fats and fiber.

Ingredients

Sweet Potato Hash:

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 small red onion diced

1 medium sweet potato (8 oz) peeled and small diced

2 cloves garlic minced

1 teaspoon chili powder

Scrambled Eggs:

12 large eggs

2 tablespoons milk

½ teaspoon salt

Smashed Avocado:

1 avocado, peeled and pitted

1 teaspoon lime juice

2 tablespoons cilantro

Pinch of salt

Other:
6 whole wheat tortillas
½ cup shredded cheddar cheese
hot sauce (optional)
Optional: salsa or sour cream for serving

Instructions

1. To make the sweet potato hash, heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and sweet potato and cook 5-6 minutes until they start to soften. Add the garlic and chili powder and cook a minute until fragrant. Season with a pinch of salt. Add 2 tablespoons of water and cover the skillet. Cook until sweet potatoes are cooked through, 8-10 minutes. Remove from heat.
2. To make the scrambled eggs, whisk the eggs, milk, and salt together in a bowl. Heat another skillet over medium heat spray with cooking spray. Add the eggs and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft curds form. Remove from heat.
3. To make the smashed avocado, smash the avocado, lime juice, cilantro and salt together in a bowl with a fork or potato masher.
4. Spread each tortilla with spoonful of smashed avocado and top it with equal portions of scrambled eggs. Top the eggs with some sweet potato hash, shredded cheese, and a dash of hot sauce (if desired). Roll the tortillas up burrito style- fold the side closest to you over the filling, then fold both sides in towards the center and roll up.
5. If desired, toast the burritos in a skillet before eating. Heat a skillet over medium heat and lightly spray with olive oil. Add the burritos to the skillet, cover, and heat 2 minutes until golden brown. Flip the burritos, cover the skillet, and cook another 2 minutes on the second side. Remove from pan. Enjoy the burritos with your favorite salsa or sour cream, if desired.
6. Burritos can be stored in the refrigerator for 3-4 days or in the freezer for 3 months.

CHEF'S TIPS

- This recipe makes 6 breakfast burritos, so if you make a batch of them on the weekend, you're pretty much set for the whole week.
- If you're not eating these burritos right away, you can store them in an airtight container in the refrigerator. They can also be frozen for up to 3 months.
- To freeze them, wrap each burrito in plastic wrap or aluminum foil and place them in the freezer. I like to place the individually wrapped burritos in a larger resealable plastic bag, label the bag with the date, and store it in the freezer.
- To heat up the burritos, simply pop them in the microwave until heated through.

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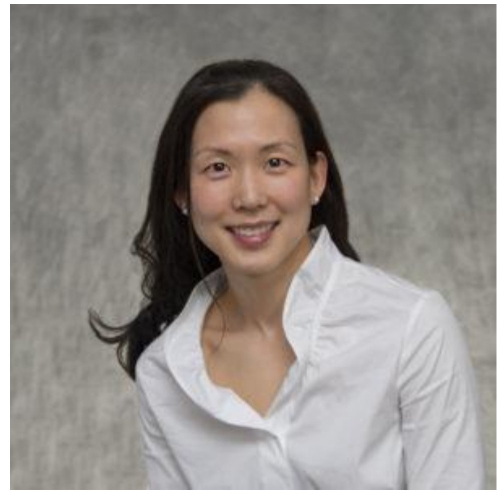
It Is Literally Possible to Be a Woman in Medicine! We Are Doing It Every Day

CHRISTINE J. KO, MD



Let's not forget that in 2021, two of five practicing physicians were women, with certain fields including (my own) dermatology, internal medicine, and pediatrics having a female predominance. Studies support that these female physicians have better patient outcomes than male physicians. The trope of the male physician and female support staff is behind us. Nevertheless, stereotypes and implicit bias are tough to reshape. Because of this, the road can be difficult to impossible at times, but our active presence every day is changing the traditional patriarchy of medicine.

Of course, I've had and have times when I don't think I'm good enough. There are ups and downs, but I try to embrace that showing up each day proves that I am good enough. Grades, honors, and accolades neither make a good physician nor prevent medical errors. We will all make mistakes because no one of us is perfect. We are all only human. Let's affirm that "good enough" is fully championing Suzanne Koven's words, "You are not a fraud. You are a flawed and unique human being."

I acknowledge that it is harder for women (and even harder for minority women or other underrepresented groups) in medicine, but you and I can both do this, especially together. What is literally impossible is to be a one-woman island in medicine. Doctors need patients, for one thing. And we need colleagues and mentors and sponsors and advocates and support staff. We need a community that believes in us being good enough. I am lucky to have a female mentor, someone who is internationally recognized and who believes I am good enough. As part and parcel of that, she encourages me to be assertive. Early on, she told me to ask to be promoted. She also said that if I got any pushback, I could mention her name to protect myself from appearing overly aggressive or ambitious. Her belief and support protected me. It is hard for me to imagine being where I am without her.

And I am lucky not just to have one mentor who believes I am good enough – I have had at least ten others in my career so far, both male and female. I have learned from them not only how to navigate the patriarchy of medicine but also that I can dress the way I want because they do. I am a leader because they have taught me, explicitly and implicitly, tips on how to lead. Sometimes I am bossy, because sometimes they are, too. Sometimes I talk over people (without intending to) like they do. We are all still good enough. And I am lucky that there have been system changes. I've benefited from my group's standard of paid maternity leave with good cross-coverage. I also did not have to demand equal pay because system-wide, then Dean Alpern of Yale School of Medicine performed an annual review of salaries to address existing disparities in salaries based on gender. While the Dean admitted the system was still imperfect, as evidenced by a 2020 settlement in favor of four female cardiologists at Yale who were paid unequally in 2016 to 2017 compared to male colleagues, there is increasing awareness as well as small and big wins.

Dr. Lycette's timely article demonstrates that there are still plenty of challenges for women in medicine. Let's get old together, be rude sometimes (and apologize), brag in circles that will celebrate us, fail and be able to admit it (again, especially in circles that will celebrate us), show emotional intelligence, and face our fears, and get out of line when we need to because the system still requires that. It is tiring, and I get tired. But let's keep changing the narrative together. We are worth it.

Christine J. Ko is a dermatopathologist.

8 Best Luxury Bedroom Ideas to Amp Up Your Room

Highstuff.com

Here are the 8 best luxury modern bedroom ideas you can try to upgrade your home to feel like a boutique hotel. Let's dive in!

1. Invest in Quality Linen and Pillows

Imagine sinking into soft heaven after a long tiring day – that's the magic of high-end bedding. Investing in premium linen and pillows not only feels luxurious but also promotes a comfortable sleep. Choose high-thread-count, pure cotton linen for a cool, breathable feel in summer and warmth in winter.

One or two layers of plush pillows help make the bed a focal point and enhance its sophistication. Choose a mix of textures and sizes, from oversized euro shams to decorative cushions. Match your linen or pillow covers either with the walls, upholstery, or curtains for a more cohesive and well-thought-out look.

2. Add Floor-To-Ceiling Curtains

Full-length curtains make your space a lot more sophisticated and elegant in an instant. They add to the length of the room, making it appear bigger and taller. Moreover, you can set the vibe of the room with these curtains.

For a cozy serene surrounding, we would suggest a neutral palette: beige, brown, white, cream. Whereas, if you want to make a statement, dark hues like purple, blue, black, and gray would work better.

Consider color and texture that complement the other decor elements of your room. Silk and velvet work best for a luxurious mood board. These modern curtain ideas will add a layer of warmth and opulence to your space.

Pro tip: if you are designing a kids' room, blue and yellow bedroom ideas might work better than dark hues or neutral whites.

3. Go For Statement Lighting

Love us a well-lit luxury bedroom! No matter what luxurious interior you put in your room, if there is not enough/ right lighting, everything can become dull and boring. Think beyond the basic overhead fixture; go for a striking chandelier or an elegant pendant light to set the tone.

For secondary lighting, you can choose between table lamps, wall sconces, or floor lamps. Pendant lighting or bedside lamps can be especially great for incorporating soft/ dimmable lighting, creating a cozy and layered ambiance for winding down before bedtime.

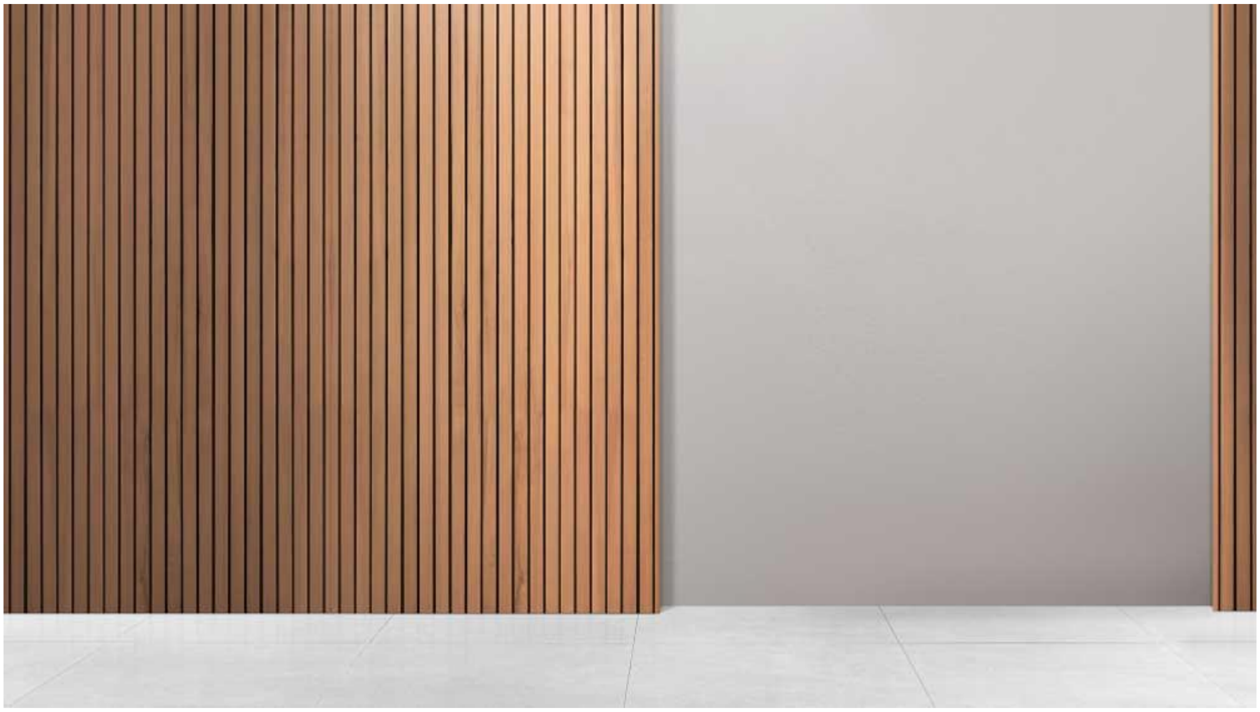
Opt for statement fixtures, such as a globe pendant light or a statement gold lamp, that scream luxury and a refined taste.

4. Play With Paneling

Want to add texture and depth to your luxury master bedroom? Wall paneling is the way to do that!

You can install a wooden half-wall panel to create a focal point behind your bed or a vertical panel to insinuate a sense of height in the room. For a more contemporary look, go for geometric design (such as diamonds or hexagons) or 3D panel designs (such as faux bricks or embossed patterns).

Intricately designed or textured panels can add depth, while minimalist styles exude modern elegance. Complement the paneling with plush velvet or satin bedding, and ornate mirrors or metallic accents for a refined decor.



5. All-Black Opulence

Indulge in the allure of all-black opulence with chic black bedroom ideas. Create a dramatic and elegant luxury bedroom interior design with black walls, ebony furniture, and dark curtains. Layer different textures like velvet, faux fur, or metallic accents to bring about variation.

Add pops of some other opulent shades like burgundy or emerald to avoid a monotonous feel. Enhance the ambiance with subtle lighting, such as a gold-toned chandelier or sleek bedside lamps. You can also place mirrors strategically to reflect light and prevent a dull or dark room.

6. Bring The Nature In

A luxury bedroom is one with life and character. And what brings life and character more than the plants?

“Interesting plants can add a sculptural, organic quality to a room or tabletop.”
Jeff Andrews (Jeff Andrews Design)

Use potted plants or hanging vines to sprinkle some greenery in your room. A small plant such as a peace lily or rubber plant can add a subtle touch of green to your decor. If you want a statement piece, a large olive tree, money plant, or black elephant ear plant may work better.

Go for chic and stylish planters that draw attention and add to the luxurious look of your space. Complement the plants with natural textures like wooden accents and stone details for a more calm and inviting vibe.

7. Pop of Gold

One of the best interior design tips for a luxury bedroom is to incorporate gold accents in the decor. It instantly brings up the sophistication of your luxury bedroom design. Gold hardware, such as drawer pulls, light fixtures, or bed frames can add to the opulence and grandeur.

Throw in subtle gold accents here and there, from minor gold detailing in the half wall to a gold planter to a gold-shaded bedside lamp. These small pops of opulence tie the room together for a more put-together and well-thought-out look.

The trick is to strike a balance – let the gold details be a whisper and not a shout. Do not overdo it as it can overwhelm the space and make it look cheap and distasteful.

8. Industrial Bedroom Ideas

Looking for a unique take on luxury room makeover ideas? Go for the raw and edgy industrial bedroom design. Metal furniture, exposed brick walls, and clean lines are the hallmarks of this stylish and modern aesthetic.

Incorporate Industrial-style lighting in your space. For example, a pendant light with exposed bulbs or a chandelier made from metal pipes will complement the interior well. Blend rugged industrial elements with soft textures like velvet for a well-balanced and refined atmosphere.

Purple and gray bedroom decorating ideas can offer a perfect color scheme for an industrial-style bedroom. The gray can complement the industrial elements while purple adds a touch of warmth and sophistication.

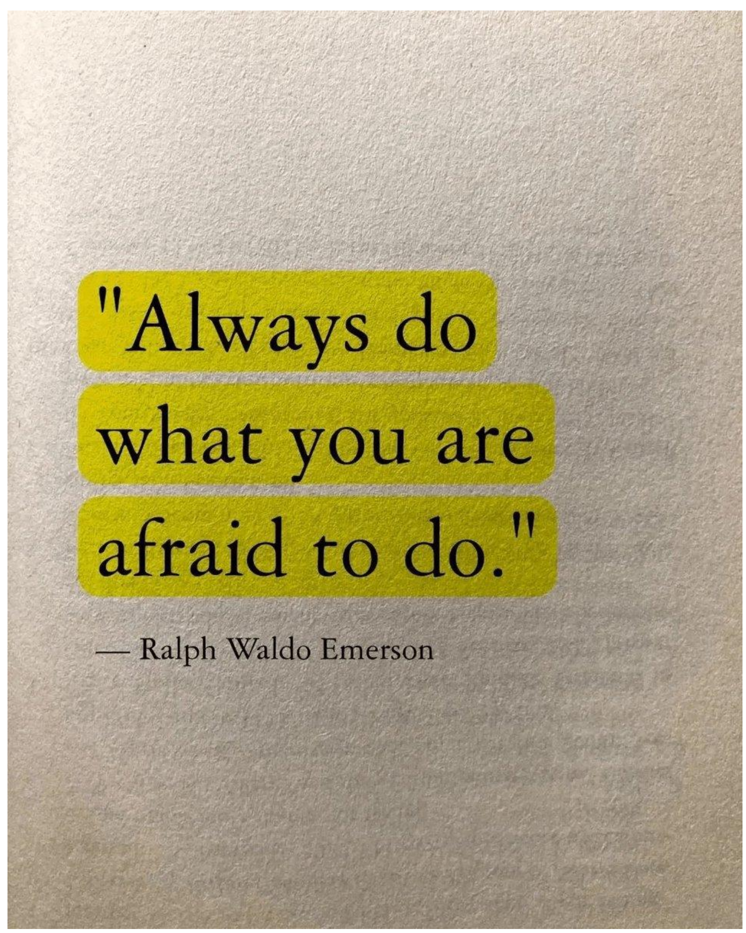
Opt for sleek, minimalist furniture with plush bedding- sophistication and comfort altogether. Industrial chic effortlessly brings a sense of modern luxury, making your space a stylish retreat that's both welcoming and upscale.

Final Verdict

Your bedroom is where you are truly yourself- it is your canvas for self-expression. So, use these luxury bedroom ideas and design your room the way you feel like.

Want subtle touches of luxury? Add a gold lamp or an emerald accent. Want a bold statement of opulence? Go for an intricate half-wall, a mural, or even a plush rug.

Remember, it's not about following trends but creating a space that brings you joy and comfort. Get inspiration from the above room makeover ideas, make mood boards on Pinterest, and start working on your dream bedroom!



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Will Patients Have to Pay for Using AI in Their Healthcare?

As AI finds its way into everyday clinical settings, a critical question emerges: will patients be asked to pay extra if AI is used in their care?

By Andrea Koncz

Key Takeaways

AI solutions are expensive to develop, especially in the healthcare setting.

There is an ongoing debate about who would pay for the advanced use of AI in diagnosis and decision-making.

We see examples where patients are offered a chance to "upgrade" their care with AI, but they have to pay for it themselves.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become increasingly integral to medical practices, with applications ranging from administrative tasks to diagnostics, patient communication, and logistics optimization. Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of AI algorithms in daily clinical practice. For instance, AI-assisted mammography and treatment planning have shown promising results in diverse settings, including both in Sweden and the U.S.

In the field of radiotherapy for cancers such as lung, prostate, and colorectal, AI technologies are being harnessed to accelerate treatment planning. This not only reduces the workload for healthcare professionals but also improves patient outcomes – a true win-win scenario we are looking for when designing these studies.

Artificial intelligence has firmly established its presence in the medical field. The primary consideration is not whether AI will be integrated into standard care, but rather how it will be implemented. Unless one has been metaphorically sleeping through the past year, much like a 21st-century Sleeping Beauty, the rise and relevance of AI in medicine is unmistakable.

Are patients to pay the cost of AI in their care?

As AI finds its way into everyday clinical settings, a critical question emerges: who will pay for the deployment (and use and maintenance) of such systems? And this is not a sci-fi question, but something we face today. This article discussed how the author was asked if she wanted to pay $40 extra for additional AI analysis in mammography. In her case a Manhattan radiology clinic offered an AI analysis of their mammogram for an additional $40, not covered by insurance. This scenario was echoed at a clinic in suburban Baltimore, where patients were similarly offered AI-assisted mammography for a $40 fee. These instances mark the initial real-world applications of AI in patient care but also introduce new factors to the healthcare equation.

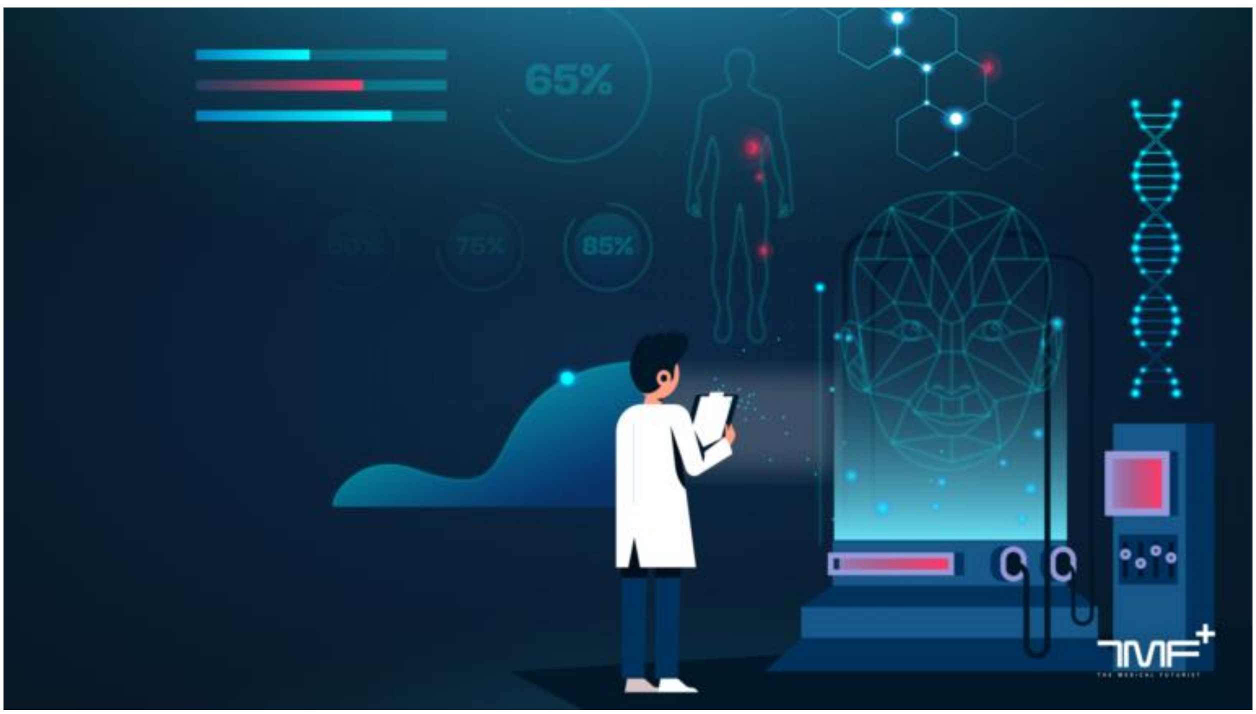
To make things more complicated, we can't look for a single, universal solution here. Healthcare systems all over the world are extremely diverse, and there will be no "one size fits all" answer that is equally applicable to the private insurance-based model in the USA to the tax-funded public healthcare in Scandinavian countries.

Will AI be cheaper or more expensive than doctors?

The question of whether AI will be more cost-effective than traditional medical practices is complex, and the earlier cited examples, where patients were charged extra for AI-assisted mammography, do not necessarily represent a universal pricing model for AI in healthcare. In the future, the cost comparison might not be straightforward and could involve weighing the price of a doctor's time against the operational costs of an AI algorithm.

Consider the scenario of laboratory tests. If AI can provide sufficient analysis at a cost of X, and you need to pay 2X for a doctor to review, relying on the algorithm's assessment becomes a cost-effective option. But of course, it may happen the other way around, it is too early to know that.
Conversely, while AI might offer an additional layer of analysis for imaging tests like MRIs, this could potentially come at a higher cost. The financial implications of AI in healthcare are still evolving, and it's unclear how these will reshape overall costs.

In countries with private insurance-based healthcare systems, the key factor is insurance coverage: will plans adapt to cover AI-enhanced services, and how will this affect premiums and out-of-pocket expenses? In countries with socialized medicine, the question is whether there are sufficient funds to deploy AI technologies in the first place.



New divides will be apparent on multiple levels

The integration of AI in healthcare, at least in the short term, threatens to create new disparities in access on multiple levels. A clear example is the AI-assisted mammography scenario: those who can afford to pay more receive additional services. Studies show better detection rates with AI, and while the routine value of such technology in clinical practice is still under evaluation, we can take it for granted that access will not be universal.

Within countries

You don't even need to have a private insurance-based system to face this issue. Let's consider moderately wealthy countries with socialized medicine and healthcare systems – like the B-tier of the developed world.

While such nations often boast relatively advanced healthcare systems, their lower GDP results in significantly less funding compared to the wealthiest countries. In such environments, we'll more likely see AI-assisted solutions in private care, but not (or not much) in the public system.
This situation also creates disparities: access is often tied to one's ability to pay. Yet, in these countries, these inequalities are obscured behind the facade of "free healthcare." This covert inequality is likely to affect many moderately wealthy nations as they struggle to incorporate AI into their public healthcare systems.

Between countries

Furthermore, we are likely to witness divides between countries and even continents. Wealthier nations with state-funded healthcare systems might introduce AI more rapidly compared to less affluent countries. For instance, Hungary might struggle to keep pace with countries like Sweden or Germany in universally implementing these technologies. And of course, there will be a much more pronounced difference between third-world countries and the wealthiest societies.

Between languages

Languages also present a barrier, as countries speaking languages with a larger global presence, such as English, Chinese, and Spanish will have more readily developed and implemented systems compared to odd, small languages spoken by a few million.

Between wealthy and struggling providers

The financial capability to invest in such technologies significantly impacts their availability and implementation. Thus, many systems might become available for some and unavailable to others, like an AI product reducing physician workload and improving efficiency may be more easily adopted by well-funded private clinics than by struggling state healthcare systems.

Leapfrogging in the third world?

However, there's an upside: AI could enable 'leapfrogging' in less developed countries. These nations might bypass the need for certain intermediate infrastructures that are costly to maintain in developed countries. This could be a stepping stone in their development, potentially turning a previous disadvantage into an opportunity. For example, AI-driven mobile health applications in remote areas could provide diagnostic support where access to healthcare professionals is limited, effectively leapfrogging the need for extensive healthcare infrastructure.

AI also presents a solution to the shortage of healthcare professionals, a challenge particularly acute in poorer regions. The migration of medical staff to wealthier areas exacerbates this problem, making access to quality healthcare even more challenging. AI could bridge this gap, offering a level of diagnostic and treatment planning support in regions where human resources are scarce.

Saying all this, it's clear that the cost of implementing AI in medicine is not a simple issue with straightforward solutions. Healthcare systems worldwide are in a phase of transition, grappling with how best to integrate AI technologies into their frameworks. Regulators, too, face the challenge of establishing guidelines that balance innovation with accessibility and fairness. As patients, we must understand this evolving situation and our options within it.

Luxe Layovers: Exploring The World's 11 Most Luxurious Airport Lounges

Relaxed, replenished, and runway-ready

by Emma Treagus

Fast food. Metal benches. And terminal boredom.
Let's be honest: long layovers are tough.

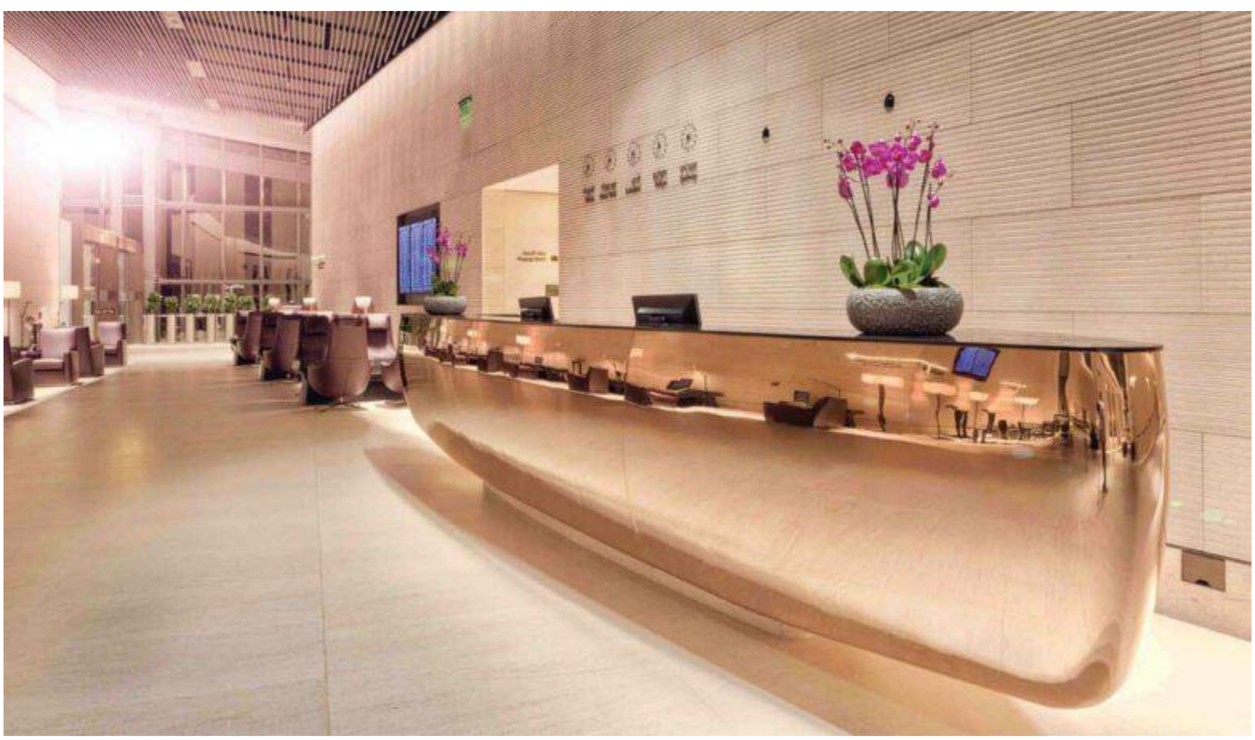
If you're traveling economy, that is. If you're traveling business class or first class, it's a different story. With access to the world's most luxurious airport lounges, you may even consider extending the wait between your first and second flights.

The seats are plush, the **Champagne** is flush and the only thing terminal is the death of bad coffee.
Got a couple of emails to catch up on? The most luxurious airport lounges are equipped with CEO-approved business rooms. In dire need of sleep and a shower? Tranquil private rooms are the ordre du jour. Feeling hungry? Just ask the Michelin-star chef to whip up his signature.

Depending on how long you intend to stay (we'll understand if you voluntarily miss your flight), you may have time for a soul-stirring spa treatment. And if you just can't sit still for a second longer, golf simulators, live cooking stations, and wellness gyms are the perfect way to prepare for takeoff.

Here are the 11 most luxurious airport lounges in the world. They'll leave you feeling replenished and runway-ready.

Qatar Airways Al Safwa First Lounge, Hamad International Airport (Qatar)



Qatar Airways' Al Safwa First Lounge at Hamad International Airport is designed to resemble a museum more than a traditional airport lounge.

With soaring ceilings, expansive spaces, and curated art pieces, the grandeur of the lounge is designed to make us forget where we are altogether. It also offers private bedrooms, spa facilities, an extensive library, *silent* water features, and fine dining with an à la carte menu.

The Al Safwa First Lounge is the best way to spend a layover in Qatar—if you're flying first class that is.

Best for: Using the world's famous museums as muse.

How to access: Accessible to Qatar Airways and Oneworld first-class passengers. Those traveling in business class can access it for a fee, subject to capacity. Alternatively, Qatar Airways Privilege Club Platinum members can enjoy complimentary access.

If there's one way to ground ourselves before we take off, it's the lush indoor garden inside Qatar Airways' Al Mourjan Lounge. Located in Hamad International Airport, the green environment is an oasis of luxury, even more so appreciated in between long flights.

The serene environment boasts opulent water features, upscale dining options, and private family rooms. Notably, the business center and quiet rooms provide the perfect space to catch up on emails and sleep. While the elegant interior and spacious seating areas allow us to reset and recenter before jumping on the next jet.

Best for: Grounding ourselves in greenery before take off.

How to access: Available to Qatar Airways and Oneworld business class passengers. Qatar Airways Privilege Club Gold and Platinum members can also access.

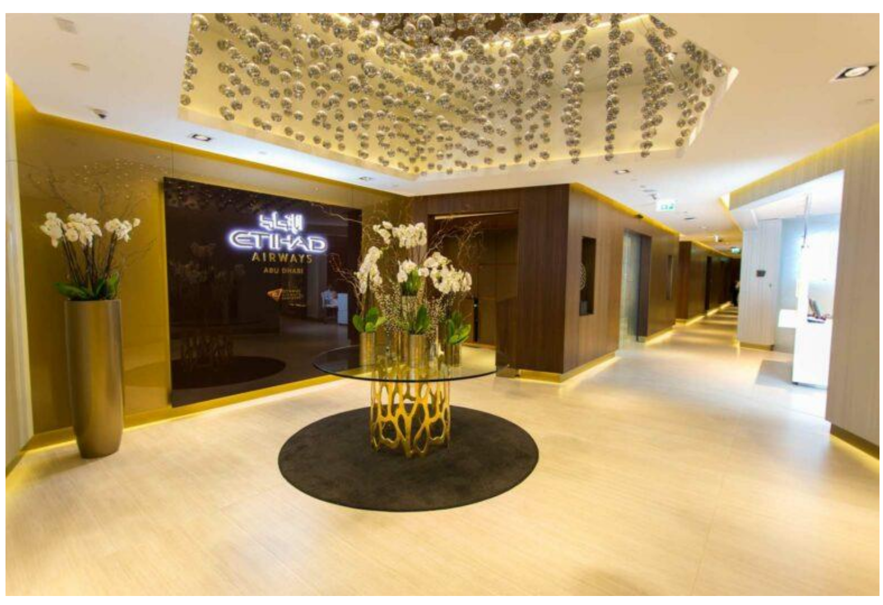
Emirates First Class Lounge, Dubai International Airport (United Arab Emirates)

The Emirates First Class Lounge is all about flying high. Located in the Dubai International Airport—one of the **world's biggest and busiest airports**—the luxury lounge features gourmet dining with a global menu, a **Moët & Chandon champagne bar**, and a Timeless Spa offering complimentary treatments.
For wine enthusiasts, there's a dedicated sommelier service. The lounge also boasts luxury shower spas, a cigar lounge, and a tranquil relaxation area.

Exclusively available to Emirates First Class passengers and Skywards Platinum members, this is a sanctuary of endless opulence and unlimited luxury.

Best for: Sheikh-worthy extravagance.
How to access: Exclusive to Emirates First Class passengers and Emirates Skywards Platinum members.

Etihad Airways First Class Lounge & Spa, Abu Dhabi International Airport (United Arab Emirates)



Reminiscent of indulgent Arabian nights, Etihad Airways' First Class Lounge & Spa at Abu Dhabi International Airport combines traditional elegance with contemporary design. The interior exudes a warm, inviting ambiance with its rich textures and serene color palette.

Unique to this experience is the Six Senses Spa offering complimentary treatments. The lounge also features a stylish cigar lounge, a fitness room, and a fine dining restaurant with a world-class chef. Children can enjoy the dedicated playroom, making it a family-friendly affair. And for wine connoisseurs, there's an exclusive cellar and A-list-worthy bar.

Best for: Arabic allure.
How to access: This lounge is accessible to Etihad Airways First Class passengers and Etihad Guest Platinum members. Additionally, those traveling in Business Class can access it for a fee, subject to availability.

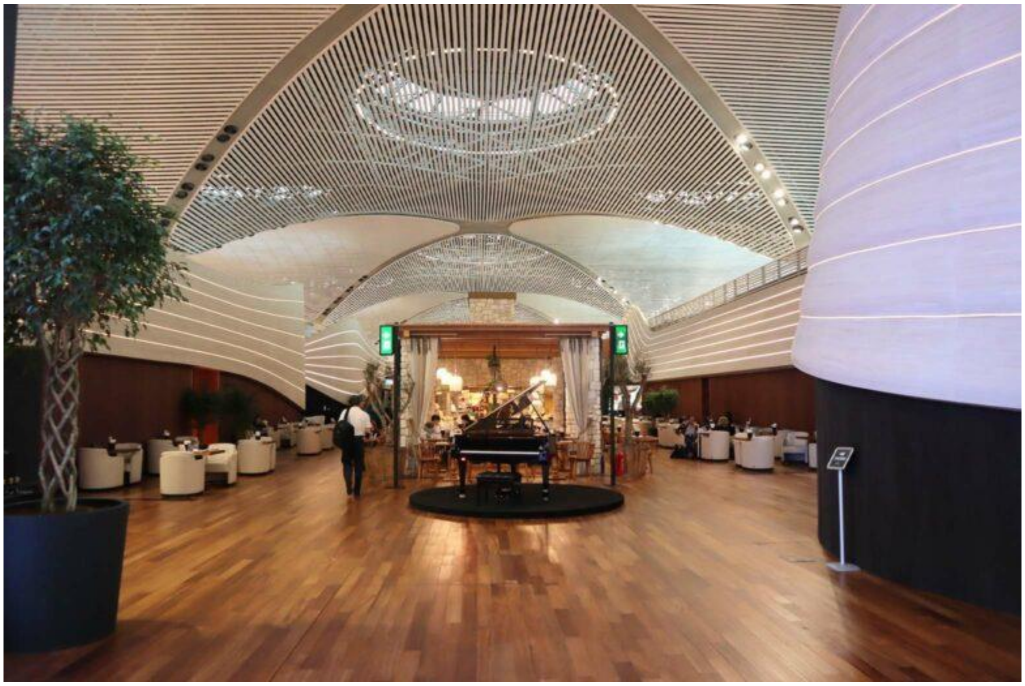
Singapore Airlines Private Room Lounge, Changi Airport (Singapore)

The Singapore Airlines Private Room Lounge at Changi Airport is the epitome of exclusivity and understated elegance. The interior mood is sophisticated and tranquil, featuring plush furnishings and a neutral, soothing color palette.

Unique to this lounge is its unparalleled privacy, offering an intimate, almost bespoke service. Guests can indulge in gourmet dining with personalized table service, and a **fine selection of wines** and champagnes. The quiet slumber rooms and luxurious shower suites allow for a moment of rest and rejuvenation.

A **private room within the already luxurious SilverKris Lounge**, it offers an elevated experience for the most discerning travelers.
Best for: Haven of peace and calm.
How to access: This exclusive space is reserved for Singapore Airlines Suites and First Class passengers.

Turkish Airlines Lounge Business, Istanbul International Airport (Turkey)



The Turkish Airlines Lounge Business blends modern luxuries with cultural influences. Reflecting a fusion of traditional Turkish elements and contemporary accents, the interior is vibrant yet calm.

Located in the Istanbul International Airport, the luxury lounge stands out as one of the most extravagant airport experiences. Featuring a live cooking station, a cinema and a golf simulator, there's plenty of entertainment to pass the time. While comfortable sleeping areas, private shower suites, and a spacious business area make us feel at home.

Additionally, the Turkish Airlines lounge showcases local art, adding a unique cultural touch to your layover.
Best for: Keeping us entertained.
How to access: Available to Turkish Airlines and Star Alliance business class passengers. Elite and Elite Plus members of the Miles & Smiles program also enjoy access, making it a preferred choice for frequent business travelers.

Oman Air First Class Lounge, Muscat International (Oman)

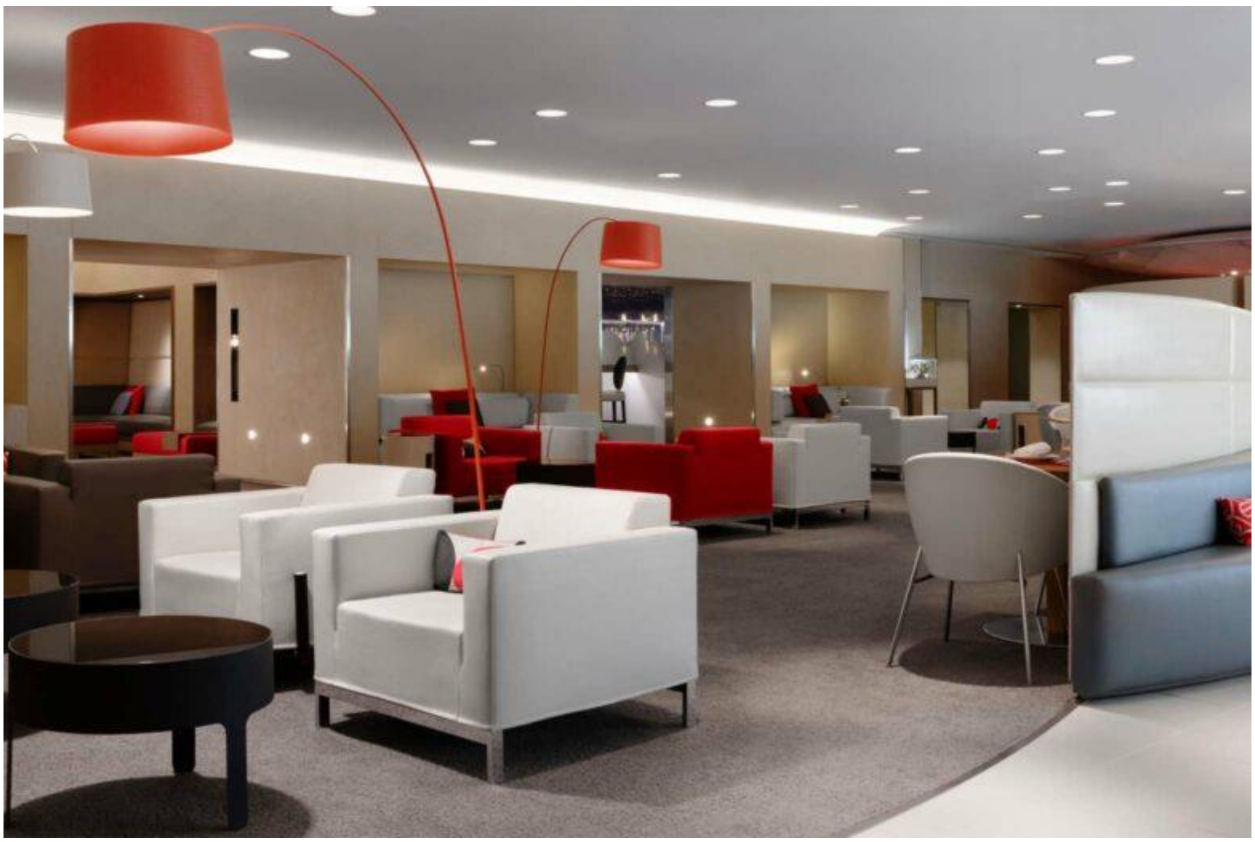
Located in the Muscat International Airport, the gold-cloaked Oman Air First

Class Lounge exudes an aura of Omani heritage blended with modern comforts. The interior is adorned with traditional Omani motifs and gold accents, creating an atmosphere of extravagant elegance.
While the lounge appears overstimulating at first glance, the atmosphere is surprisingly tranquil. The serene setting is complemented by high-end amenities such as private suites, a fine dining area serving exquisite cuisine, and a spa offering world-class treatments.

The Oman Air Lounge also features a cigar lounge, a business center, and a dedicated kids' room to entertain the little ones.

Best for: A taste of Omani opulence.
How to access: Exclusive to Oman Air first-class passengers, as well as Sindbad Gold and Silver members.

Air France La Première Lounge, Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport (France)

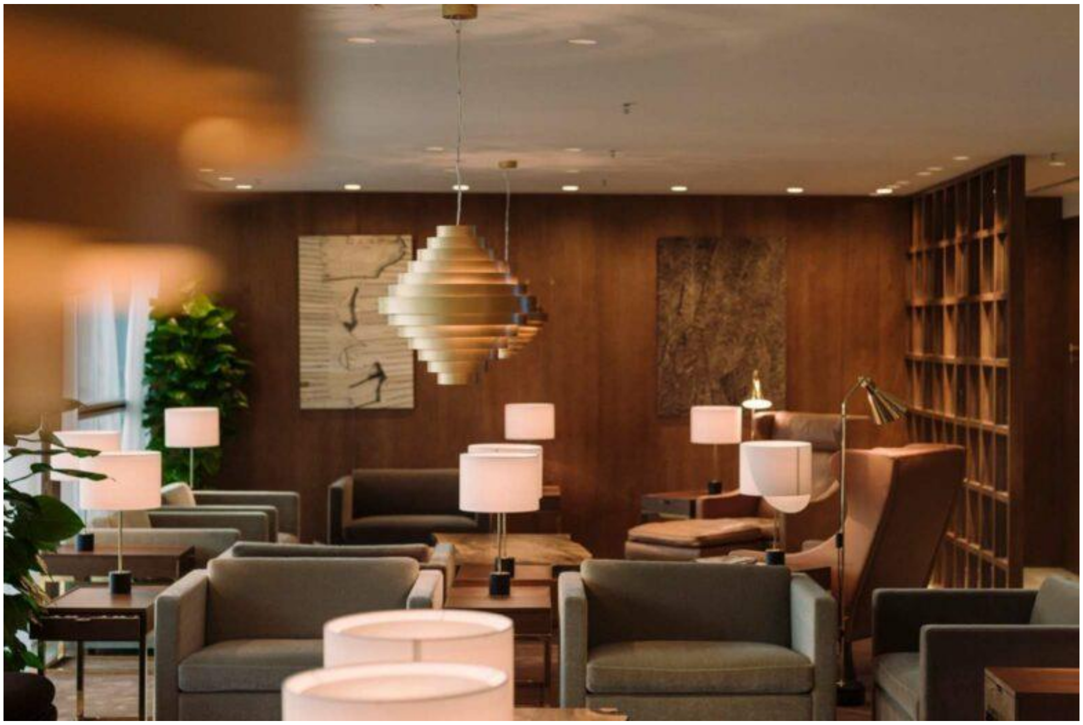


Exhibiting a certain je ne sais quoi, the Air France La Première Lounge is one of the most luxurious airports in the world. Modeled after the hush-hush glamor of old-school Paris, the mood is one of refined sophistication, adorned with rich red fabrics. While avant-garde touches invite you to relax and replenish.

One of the key distinguishing features of the luxury lounge is the Biologique Recherche spa, renowned for its effective, soul-stirring treatments. Spa aside, guests can also indulge in gourmet cuisine prepared by **Michelin-starred chefs**, enjoy the private suites, and experience a dedicated concierge service. The ambiance is further enhanced by a **curated selection of fine champagnes** and wines.
This is one way to make the most of Paris without ever leaving the airport.

Best for: Pampering yourself in Paris.
How to access: This exclusive lounge is accessible to Air France La Première (First Class) passengers. Elite Plus members of the SkyTeam alliance also enjoy access.

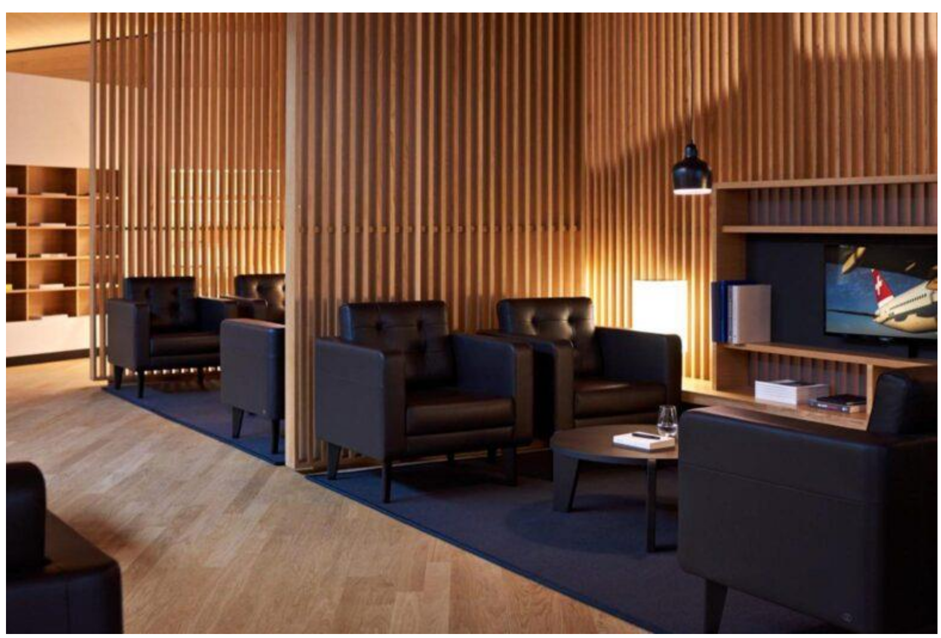
Cathay Pacific The Pier First Class Lounge, Hong Kong International Airport (China)



The Cathay Pacific The Pier First Class Lounge at Hong Kong International Airport hits the elusive sweet spot between natural tranquility and modern luxury. The interior features warm, earthy tones, lots of indoor plants, and rich wooden textures, creating a soothing and inviting atmosphere.
But it's also equipped with high-end amenities. The Day Suites area allows for moments of privacy and relaxation. The Retreat offers foot massages and cabanas with showers. The tranquil Tea House is one way to forget a tumultuous journey. While the à la carte restaurant caters to the most discerning individuals with its fine dining menu.

Best for: Soul-stirring tranquility.
How to access: Accessible to first-class passengers of Cathay Pacific and other Oneworld airlines. Top-tier members of the Marco Polo Club, as well as Oneworld Emerald members, can also experience this serene sanctuary.

Swiss First Class Lounge at Terminal E, Zurich International Airport (Switzerland)



Located in Terminal E of the Zurich International Airport, the Swiss First Class Lounge is a bastion of modern minimalism and Swiss sophistication. The interior is characterized by sleek, contemporary designs, featuring clean lines and a natural color palette. While avant-garde lighting and textures reflect its prestigious exclusivity.

Unique features include a gourmet restaurant serving exquisite local and international cuisine, private mini-suites with showers, and a terrace with **breathtaking views of the Swiss Alps**. The lounge also offers a whisky bar boasting an impressive selection of spirits.

Best for: The pinnacle of meticulous Swiss sophistication.
How to access: The lounge is exclusively available to SWISS and Lufthansa First Class passengers, as well as HON Circle Members.

Lufthansa First Class Terminal, Frankfurt International Airport (Germany)

The Lufthansa First Class Terminal at Frankfurt International Airport is the epitome of German luxury and efficiency. The mood is one of exclusive sophistication, featuring sleek interiors and contemporary designs, accented with delicate touches like pink cherry blossom trees.

An **entire terminal dedicated to first-class luxury**, the lounge stands out for its unparalleled personal service, including a private security screening and a personal assistant to escort guests to their flights.

The terminal features high-end amenities like private office units, luxury shower rooms, and a Cigar Lounge. Guests can enjoy gourmet dining and a vast selection of wines and spirits at the bar. The unique car service directly to the aircraft adds an extra touch of opulence.

Best for: Feeling like the guest of honor.
How to access: This unique terminal is accessible to Lufthansa First Class passengers and HON Circle Members.

Frequently asked questions about luxury airport lounges

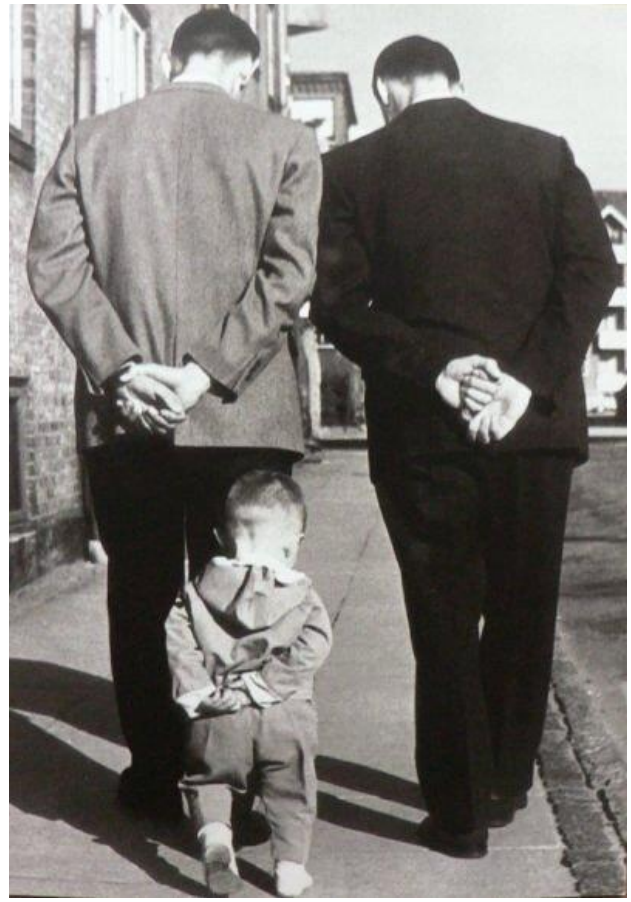
Can anyone access luxury airport lounges?
Access to the best airport lounges is generally restricted. They're typically only available to passengers traveling in first class or business class, or those holding elite status with specific airlines. Some lounges offer paid entry or access through certain credit cards or day passes, but this varies by airline and lounge.

How can I access luxury airport lounges?
To access luxury airport lounges, you can fly in premium cabins (first class or business class), use elite status or memberships with airlines, leverage certain credit cards offering lounge access, or use Priority Pass memberships. Some lounges also sell day passes or offer annual lounge passes for frequent travelers.

Can I access a luxury airport lounge if I'm flying on an economy class ticket?
Depending on the lounge, you may be able to access Business Class airport lounges with an Economy Class ticket. This can be done through certain credit card benefits, purchasing a day pass, holding elite status with an airline's frequent flier program, or through lounge access programs like Priority Pass. However, the best airport lounges are typically only available to First Class passengers.

Is it worth it to buy airport lounge access?
Buying airport lounge access can be worth it for longer layovers, business travel, or if you simply desire comfort and amenities like private rooms, entertainment, gourmet food and showers. It ultimately depends on your travel style, budget, and the quality of the lounge.

The Dakota Studios



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