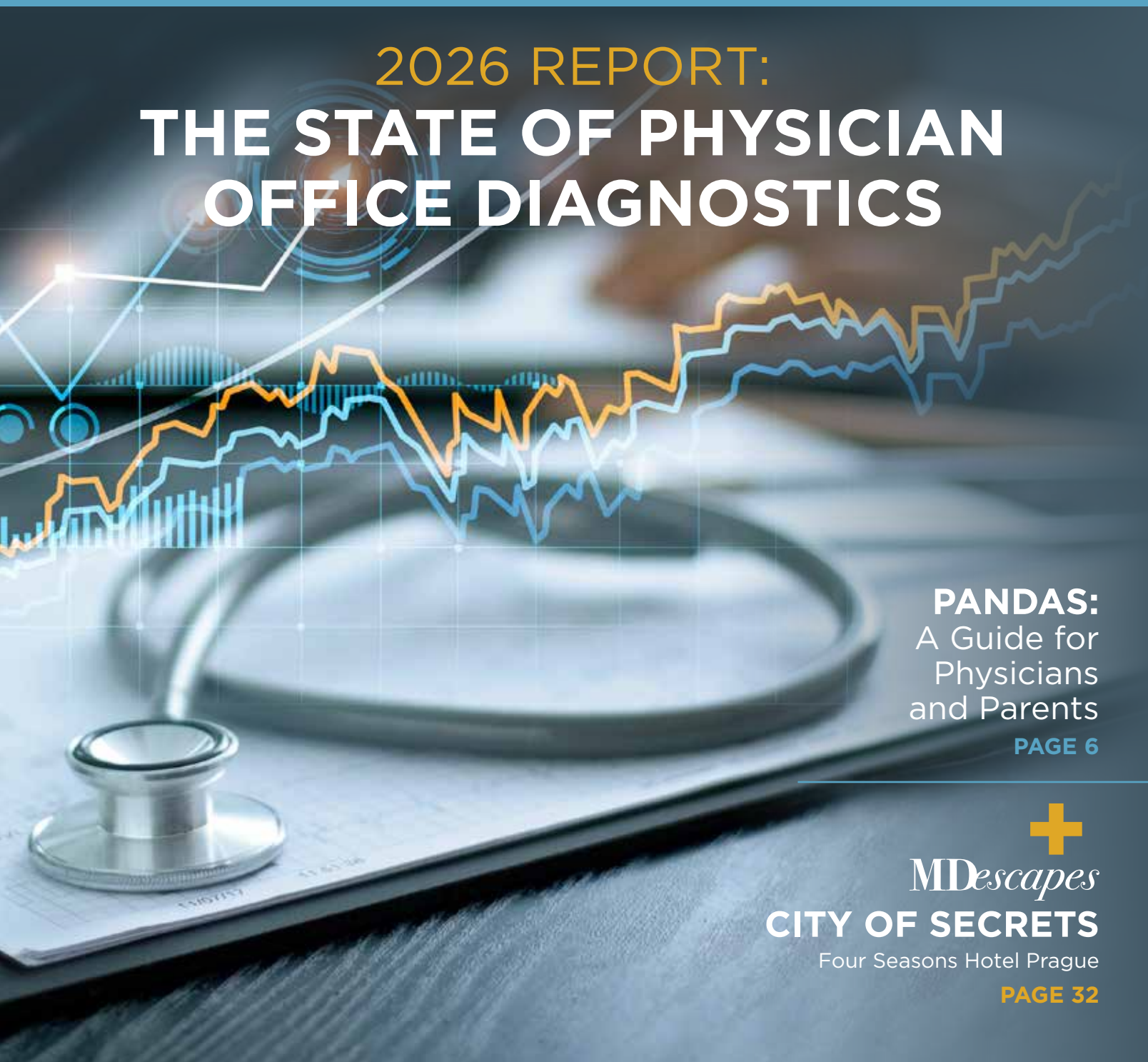
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Physicians office Resource

Resources for You, Your Patients, & Your Practice



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THE POWER TO DETECT THE HIDDEN THREAT OF PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL DISEASE (PAD)



"PAD IS ASYMPTOMATIC IN 75% OF ELDERLY PATIENTS." [1]

IN PRIMARY CARE: "THE RISK OF MORTALITY WAS SIMILAR IN SYMPTOMATIC AND ASYMPTOMATIC PATIENTS WITH PAD" [2]

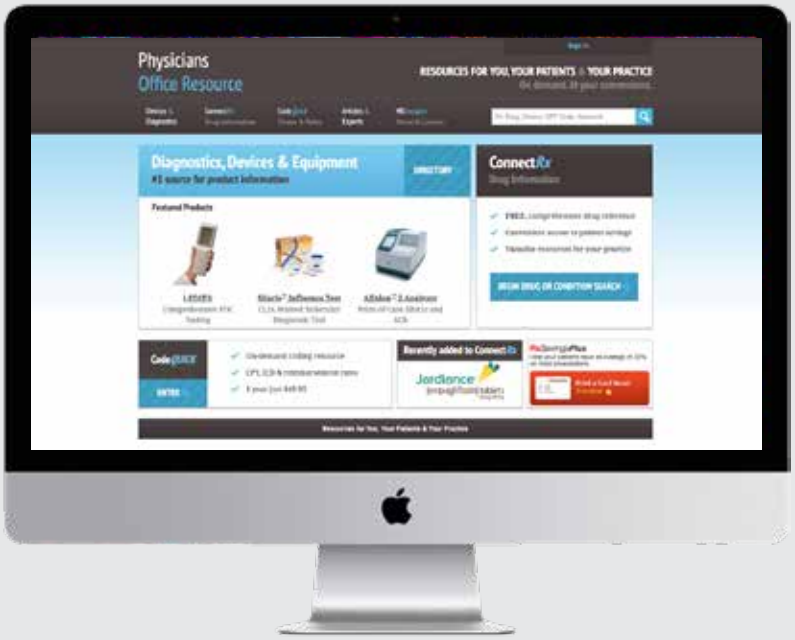
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THE STATE OF PHYSICIAN OFFICE DIAGNOSTICS:

2026 REPORT

Physician office diagnostics are in the middle of a practical “reset” in 2026. The pandemic era normalized rapid, near-patient testing and raised expectations for convenience and speed. Now, the day-to-day reality is being shaped by a different mix of forces: workforce constraints, tighter margins, payer friction, evolving respiratory-virus guidance, and a growing demand to make care decisions in the exam room rather than “send-outs and wait.”

6

PANDAS: A Guide for Physicians and Parents

Strep throat is one of those common childhood illnesses that can usually be treated with a simple round of antibiotics, but sometimes it can have greater ramifications for the child.

32

MDescapes: Four Seasons Hotel Prague

The striking floral arrangement in the lobby is the first clue I’m at a Four Seasons property, as it seems to be a signature style element for the brand. The energy is noticeable, soft voices and giggles signal that something is afoot.



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FEATURE

PANDAS

A GUIDE FOR PHYSICIANS AND PARENTS

BY SEKISUI DIAGNOSTICS

Strep throat is one of those common childhood illnesses that can usually be treated with a simple round of antibiotics, but sometimes it can have greater ramifications for the child. Some children can develop sudden physical and psychiatric symptoms a few weeks after infection, a condition called Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS).

While the true prevalence of PANDAS is not known, the U.S. PANDAS Network estimates that one in 200 children are affected, typically between the ages of four and nine years old.[1] Physicians treating pediatric patients should be aware of the symptoms of PANDAS, how to diagnose PANDAS, and what treatments are available.

Symptoms of PANDAS

The onset of PANDAS symptoms is usually about four to six weeks after infection with strep. These include behaviors similar to obsessive-compulsive disorder and Tourette's, which can then worsen within a couple of days.[2]

There are both psychological and physical symptoms that manifest with PANDAS. This is an episodic condition, which means that symptoms may disappear for a while and then recur later, especially with another strep infection.[3]

These symptoms include the following[4]:

- Obsessive, compulsive, and repetitive behaviors
- Separation anxiety, fear, and panic attacks.
- Incessant screaming, irritability, and frequent mood changes
- Tics and unusual movements,
- Sensitivities to light, sound, and touch
- Hyperactivity, inability focus, and memory problems
- Joint pain, depression, and sleep problems
- Lack of interest in food, leading to weight loss

Diagnosing PANDAS

Because there's no specific test to identify it, and the symptoms can indicate other disorders, PANDAS is not easy to diagnose. If there are any unusual symptoms after the strep infection, make an appointment with your pediatrician to conduct a strep test or a blood test to rule out anything else.[5]

According to Healthline, diagnosing PANDAS requires "a careful medical history and physical examination." The diagnosis has to meet a certain level of criteria to qualify for PANDAS[6]:

- Between three years old and puberty
- Sudden onset or worsening of already existing symptoms, with symptoms becoming more severe for periods of time
- Presence of obsessive-compulsive behaviors, tic disorder, or both
- Evidence of other neuropsychiatric symptoms, such as hyper activity, mood changes, developmental regression, or anxiety
- Previous or current strep-A infection, confirmed by a throat culture or blood test

Treating PANDAS

PANDAS treatment involves addressing both the physical and psychiatric symptoms, starting with ensuring that the strep infection is completely gone.[7]

Early treatment for PANDAS is ideal because it can minimize future relapses, which can increase the duration and intensity of symptoms down the road. If treated early, children with PANDAS can go into remission entirely. If left untreated, PANDAS can cause permanent debilitation and can even become encephalitic.[8]

Treating PANDAS can address different aspects of the syndrome – antibiotics can help control or reduce symptoms, while other treatments like intravenous immunoglobin replacement (IVIG) therapy can help to address any underlying infections and autoimmune reaction that causes PANDAS. IVIG, which is an off label use, involves the use of an immunoglobulin solution to treat immune deficiencies, which some physicians and researchers believe can address the encephalitic-like inflammation.[9]

PANDAS Outlook

The prognosis for children with PANDAS depends on several factors, most notably how quickly they were diagnosed.[10] Any delay in diagnosis allows symptoms to settle in and become harder to treat. While remission periods are fairly common, there can be flare ups of symptoms that are shorter, less intense, and more manageable as children receive appropriate treatment.



This is a challenging condition, but it's important to know that complete recovery is possible with early diagnosis and proper treatment. Outside of medical treatment, there are many ways that families can create a supportive, peaceful environment that helps their child manage PANDAS symptoms. It's important to establish routines and maintain consistent daily schedules to provide stability during the unpredictable flares of symptoms. Predictability is a strong ally in these situations.

Being emotionally supportive helps the child to understand that their symptoms are not their fault and that treatment can help them. Any reassurance that providers or parents can provide a supportive environment for healing and understanding. Family counseling and even support groups are great for additional resources.

Educational support is also important because it encourages transparency between parents and teachers about the child's condition to ensure that they understand the full scope of the diagnosis and the nature of these behavioral changes.[11] PANDAS is a challenging condition for children to be diagnosed with, but it's important to remember that there is hope with an early diagnosis and comprehensive treatment plan.

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*CLIA moderately complex.



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QuantaFlo® PAD is an easy to use, accurate, point of care, non-invasive solution that aids in the early detection of peripheral arterial disease (PAD). This FDA cleared device can be administered by a medical aide in less than 5 minutes. As published in the Journal of Vascular Surgery and the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, QuantaFlo detected undiagnosed PAD in 31.6% of patients +65.1 QuantaFlo is portable and integrates with other technologies and platforms. It is ideal for both home and clinic environments.

1. Smolderen KG, Ameli O, Chaisson CE, Heath K, Mena-Hurtado C. Peripheral Artery Disease Screening in the Community and 1-Year Mortality, Cardiovascular Events, and Adverse Limb Events, AJPM Focus (2022), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.focus.2022.100016



FLU AND RESPIRATORY

BD VERITOR™ SYSTEM FOR RAPID DETECTION OF SARS-COV-2 & FLU A+B* (EUA) TEST

From BD Veritor™ Plus System

6010

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A 3-in-1 antigen assay for COVID-19, Flu A and Flu B with test results in 15 minutes.[1]

The BD Veritor™ Plus System streamlines clinical and patient workflows by detecting three key respiratory viruses in one test, reducing the need for multiple sample collections. With multiple testing modes and workflow efficiencies, the analyzer empowers convenience and efficiency (1 kit = 30 tests).



*In the USA, the BD Veritor™ System for Rapid Detection of SARS-CoV-2 & Flu A+B has not been FDA cleared or approved but has been authorized by the FDA under an Emergency Use Authorization for use by authorized laboratories; use by laboratories certified under the CLIA, 42 U.S.C. §263a, that meet requirements to perform moderate, high, or waived complexity tests. The product is authorized for use at the Point of Care (POC), i.e., in patient care settings operating under a CLIA Certificate of Waiver, Certificate of Compliance, or Certificate of Accreditation.

This product has been authorized only for the detection of proteins from SARS-CoV-2, influenza A and influenza B, not for any other viruses or pathogens; and, in the USA, the emergency use of this product is only authorized for the duration of the declaration that circumstances exist justifying the authorization of emergency use of in vitro diagnostics for detection and/or diagnosis of COVID 19 under Section 564(b)(1) of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, 21 U.S.C. §360bbb-3(b)(1), unless the declaration is terminated or authorization is revoked sooner.

1. BD Veritor™ Plus System for Rapid Detection of SARS-CoV-2 and Flu A+B. Package insert. 500051910 Becton, Dickinson and Company.

STATUS FLU A&B

From LifeSign

6011

SCAN TO LEARN MORE

Status Flu A & B is an in vitro rapid qualitative test that detects influenza type A and type B directly from nasal swab, nasopharyngeal swab, and nasopharyngeal aspirate/wash specimens obtained from patients with signs and symptoms of respiratory infection. It is intended to aid in the rapid differential diagnosis of Influenza A and B viral infections.

- CLIA waived *Innovative flip design with onboard sample extraction
- Premeasured developer solution capsule for increased accuracy and ease of use
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STATUS COVID-19/FLU A&B PANEL TEST

From LifeSign

6012

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A Rapid Immunoassay for the Simultaneous Direct Detection and Differential Diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2, Influenza Type A and Type B Antigen from Anterior Nasal and Nasopharyngeal swab specimens. Infections with these viruses may present similar symptoms. Can you tell them apart? WE CAN!



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1. Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) / * SEFRIA Fentanyl

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FLU AND RESPIRATORY

BE PREPARED FOR RESPIRATORY SEASONS WITH THE OSOM® COVID-19 ANTIGEN RAPID TEST

From Sekisui Diagnostics

6014

SCAN TO LEARN MORE

The OSOM® COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test is a lateral flow immunoassay that detects the SARS-CoV-2 nucleocapsid protein with a nasal swab in only 15 minutes at the point-of-care. The test is intended to be used by healthcare professionals or operators on patients suspected of COVID-19 within the first 7 days of symptom onset. The clinical performance compares favorably against polymerase chain reaction methodology, with a positive percent agreement of 95.1% and a negative percent agreement of 97%.

OSOM® COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test has not been FDA cleared or approved. It is authorized by FDA under an EUA for prescription use only. It has been authorized only for the detection of SARS-CoV-2 antigen, not for any other viruses or pathogens and is only authorized for the duration of the declaration that circumstances exist justifying the authorization of emergency use of in vitro diagnostics for detection and/or diagnosis of COVID-19 under Section 564(b)(1) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, 21 U.S.C S360bbb-3(b)(1), unless the authorization is terminated or revoked sooner.



METRIX® COVID/FLU TEST RAPID MOLECULAR TEST – PROVIDE LAB QUALITY RESULTS IN JUST 20 MINUTES

From Sekisui Diagnostics

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- 3-in-1 Multiplex – Detects COVID-19, Flu A and Flu B from one swab, in one test
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- Convenient– No maintenance or calibration, ready for testing any time
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COVID-19 OR FLU? STOP GUESSING. ONE SWAB, ONE TEST, RESULTS IN JUST 10 MINUTES

From Sekisui Diagnostics

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From only one sample, the OSOM® Flu SARS-CoV-2 Combo Test simultaneously detects and differentiates between COVID-19, Flu A, and Flu B in just 10 minutes, allowing healthcare providers to make more informed decisions when treating patients who are symptomatic with viral infections that have similar symptoms, but different treatment protocols. Designed for point-of-care testing, the OSOM® Flu SARS-CoV-2 Combo Test empowers healthcare providers with the confidence necessary to initiate immediate treatment and isolation protocols at the very first patient visit.

This test has not been FDA cleared or approved. It is authorized by FDA under an EUA for use by authorized laboratories. It has been authorized only for the detection of proteins from SARS-CoV-2, influenza A and influenza B, not for any other viruses or pathogens and is only authorized for the duration of the declaration that circumstances exist justifying the authorization of emergency use of in vitro diagnostics for detection and/or diagnosis of COVID-19 under Section 564(b)(1) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, 21 U.S.C S360bbb-3(b)(1), unless the authorization is terminated or revoked sooner.



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FLU AND RESPIRATORY

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- Walkaway Functionality
- Ease Of Use
- Smart Safety Features



NOW IT'S MORE THANK JUST A BLOOD TEST

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HEMATOLOGY

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From CitoCBC

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PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL DISEASE

QUANTAFLO® PAD

From Semler Scientific

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QuantaFlo® PAD is an easy to use, accurate, point of care, non-invasive solution that aids in the early detection of peripheral arterial disease (PAD). This FDA cleared device can be administered by a medical aide in less than 5 minutes. As published in the Journal of Vascular Surgery and the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, QuantaFlo detected undiagnosed PAD in 31.6% of patients +65.1 QuantaFlo is portable and integrates with other technologies and platforms. It is ideal for both home and clinic environments.

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PAD TESTING SYSTEMS IDEAL FOR PRIMARY CARE TO VASCULAR SPECIALISTS

from Newman Medical

6024

SCAN TO LEARN MORE

Your Patients Trust YOU To Find Their Peripheral Artery Disease
- High-risk patients include those over 65, diabetics, and smokers.
- If left untreated, 25% of patients with PAD will experience a heart attack or stroke within 5 years.
- PAD symptoms are often mistaken for arthritis or old age.

The simpleABI Cuff-Link System is Easy to Learn and Use.
- With a push-button remote, automatic calculations, and waveforms, it’s incredibly user-friendly.
- Reports are straightforward to save and share since the system is PC-based.

Outstanding Value and Reimbursements
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- Medicare reimbursements vary by exam and location, averaging from $91 to $174.





THE STATE OF PHYSICIAN OFFICE DIAGNOSTICS: 2026 REPORT

AARON MEDARIS – PUBLISHER PHYSICIANS OFFICE RESOURCE

Physician office diagnostics are in the middle of a practical "reset" in 2026. The pandemic era normalized rapid, near-patient testing and raised expectations for convenience and speed. Now, the day-to-day reality is being shaped by a different mix of forces: workforce constraints, tighter margins, payer friction, evolving respiratory-virus guidance, and a growing demand to make care decisions in the exam room rather than "send-outs and wait."

Across many specialties, but especially primary care, pediatrics, OBGYN, dermatology, and pain management, the common theme is the same: diagnostics are no longer an ancillary service—they're a core operational capability. Practices that treat testing as a system (clinical pathways + workflow + quality + connectivity + reimbursement) are better positioned to improve patient experience, protect revenue, and reduce downstream leakage.

Below is a specialty-aware look at what's changing—and what to prioritize—based on current guidance and policy signals heading into the 2025–2026 respiratory season and beyond.

1. The 2026 physician-office diagnostic landscape: what's driving change

Patients expect "answers today"
Consumer expectations now mirror urgent care and retail clinic norms: rapid answers, same-visit treatment decisions, and minimal follow-up friction. This is most visible in respiratory illness, STI evaluation, pregnancy-related concerns, UTI workups, and medication monitoring. This shift is one of the primary drivers behind expanded point-of-care testing menus and upgraded workflows designed to reduce callbacks and follow-ups.

Respiratory viruses remain the workflow stress test
The 2025–2026 season guidance continues to emphasize practical outpatient decision-making for influenza, COVID-19, and RSV—where testing can guide treatment, but therapy shouldn't always wait for a result.

In practice, that means your testing menu and turnaround time (TAT) must match your clinical "decision window"—especially for higher-risk patients who benefit most from early antivirals.

Administrative burden pushes more "diagnostics at the point of decision"
Prior authorization and payer utilization management continue to pressure staffing and throughput. The American Medical Association's prior authorization survey documents sustained burden and limited adoption of exemptions like "gold card" programs.

While PA is often discussed in imaging and specialty drug contexts, the operational response is broader: practices prefer diagnostics that reduce avoidable referrals, repeat visits, and delayed treatment.

CLIA compliance expectations are tightening back to "normal"
Post–public health emergency flexibilities are gone; Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services communications underscore the return to pre-PHE requirements for starting testing (e.g., needing applicable fees and a CLIA number/certificate before testing). For offices expanding beyond waived testing, the compliance and inspection readiness burden is real—and must be planned.

2. 2026 "must-have" diagnostic capabilities in primary care

Primary care remains the hub where a high volume of decisions benefit from rapid, reliable data. The most successful offices in 2026 are building a diagnostic footprint around five high-value categories:

Respiratory infection triage and treatment pathways
The question isn't "Do we test?" but what we do with results, and how quickly.

What's shifting:
- Outpatient guidance recognizes that a positive test isn't always required to start antivirals for influenza or COVID-19, particularly when clinical suspicion is high and the patient is at risk for severe disease—yet testing can support appropriate treatment choices and stewardship.
- Practices increasingly want differentiation (flu vs COVID-19 vs RSV), because it affects antiviral use, isolation guidance, return-to-school/work counseling, and risk stratification.

Operational insight:
If your workflow can't deliver a result within the visit (or in a timeframe that changes management), testing becomes "docu-

mentation" rather than decision support. In 2026, many offices are evaluating whether they need:

- Rapid antigen testing for immediate triage, plus
- Higher-sensitivity options (often molecular) for cases where false negatives are costly (high-risk patients, outbreaks, congregate settings, or when treatment hinges on confidence).

Cardiometabolic monitoring as "care velocity"

Diabetes, dyslipidemia, and kidney risk management depend on routine, repeatable monitoring. Offices that accelerate monitoring reduce gaps in care and strengthen quality performance.

Practical emphasis for 2026:

- Make sure your diagnostic cadence aligns with guide line-driven intervals (and your payer contracts).
- Close the loop: results reviewed, acted upon, documented, and communicated without delays.

Urinalysis, pregnancy testing, and basic microscopy decisions

Despite being "old school," these tests remain high-impact for differential diagnosis and triage—especially in primary care and OBGYN.

FIT testing and preventive screening enablement

Even when the test is completed at home, the office's role is diagnostic enablement: ordering, tracking, results capture, follow-up, and colonoscopy referral navigation.

Medication safety and monitoring

Point-of-care decisions around anticoagulation history, renal function considerations, and adherence counseling increasingly depend on having actionable data quickly (even if confirmatory testing is sent out).

3. Pediatrics: fast answers, infection control, and family-centered decisions

Pediatrics is uniquely sensitive to household dynamics, school policies, and caregiver anxiety—making rapid diagnostics a clinical and communication tool.

2026 pediatric diagnostic priorities:

- Respiratory season playbooks: define when to test, when to treat, and when to reassure.
- Strep testing workflow (and follow-up culture/confirmatory strategy, depending on the method you use and local policies).
- Dehydration and UTI pathways: avoid missed diagnoses while minimizing unnecessary antibiotics.

Operational insight:

Peds offices benefit from "family flow" design—specimen collection that's quick, predictable, and consistent, with scripts for what results mean (and don't mean). In 2026, consistency is as valuable as technology.

4) OBGYN: accuracy, timeliness, and patient trust

OBGYN care frequently relies on diagnostics that carry immediate patient implications and require thoughtful counseling.

High-value focus areas:

- Pregnancy confirmation and early evaluation workflows.
- Vaginitis/STI testing pathways that balance speed, accuracy, and overtreatment risk.
- Prenatal screening coordination (where the office often manages timing, logistics, and follow-up—even for send-out assays).

Operational insight:

In OBGYN, the best diagnostic systems reduce "diagnostic limbo"—that waiting period where anxiety rises, phone calls increase, and follow-up adherence drops. Clear expected timelines, patient messaging, and electronic result capture matter as much as the test itself.

5. Dermatology: diagnostics that prevent delays and repeat visits

Dermatology diagnostics in-office often revolve around rapid rule-outs and procedure-based confirmation.

Common diagnostic drivers:

- KOH preps and simple microscopy decisions (where used and supported by training).
- Biopsy workflows: specimen integrity, pathology partner performance, and result turnaround expectations.
- Acne and inflammatory disease monitoring: labs tied to medication safety and long-term management.

Operational insight:

Derm practices that treat diagnostics as a supply chain (collection → labeling → transport → pathology coordination → patient follow-up) reduce rework and reputational risk. In 2026, reliability is a competitive advantage.

6. Pain management: monitoring, risk stratification, and documentation integrity

Pain management is documentation- and compliance-intensive, and diagnostics often function as part clinical tool, part risk-management tool.

Diagnostic considerations:

- Toxicology testing policies (including appropriate use, patient communication, and consistency).
- Comorbidity monitoring (renal/hepatic considerations, metabolic risk, and medication interactions).
- Clear documentation workflows to support medical necessity and minimize payer disputes.

Operational insight:

In pain management, diagnostic strategy should be policy-driven and transparent—patients do better when expectations are clear, consistent, and framed as safety and quality rather than suspicion.

7. Quality, compliance, and the "CLIA reality check" for 2026

For many offices, the question is whether to remain primarily CLIA-waived or expand into moderate complexity. Each choice has consequences.

Key compliance signals to keep on your radar:

- CMS has emphasized that after the public health emergency, laboratories may only begin testing after they meet applicable requirements and receive their CLIA number/certificate—i.e., expedited COVID-era pathways are not the norm.
- Proficiency testing requirements remain a core operational

obligation for many non-waived testing areas (and are updated annually).

Practical takeaway:
If you expand your in-office menu, don't just budget for the instrument—budget for training, QC, documentation, competency assessment, proficiency testing, and inspection readiness.

8. Reimbursement and operations: what "good" looks like now

Even with excellent clinical intent, diagnostics fail when operations break down. In 2026, high-performing practices build around these operational pillars:

A. Clinical pathways first, test menu second
Start with: "What decisions do we make in-visit, same-day, 48 hours, and one week?" Then align test methods and partners to those decision timelines.

B. Staffing design and cross-training
Because turnover happens, resilience requires:
- Role-based checklists (collection, run, QC, documentation)
- Cross-training at least two people per testing workflow
- Simple competency refresh routines

C. Connectivity and results capture
If results aren't discrete-data captured, searchable, and reportable, you lose value:
- Quality reporting becomes harder
- Follow-up is inconsistent
- Population management suffers

D. Patient communication as a diagnostic deliverable
"Your test is negative" is not enough. In 2026, patients want:
- What the result means
- What to watch for
- When to return
- Whether treatment is still recommended based on risk

E. Administrative friction still matters
Prior authorization burden remains a significant operational drag in physician practices, consuming staff time and delaying care.

Diagnostics that reduce unnecessary downstream services—and support defensible documentation—help practices navigate this reality.

9. The 2026–2027 outlook: where physician office diagnostics is headed

Expect three major trends to intensify:

1. More "near-patient" decision support
Not every test becomes point-of-care, but more clinical choices will be made with immediate data—especially for respiratory illness and chronic disease touchpoints.

2. Higher expectations for performance and stewardship
As more advanced tests migrate closer to the patient, practices will face pressure to use them appropriately—avoiding unnecessary antibiotics, reducing repeat visits, and improving guideline adherence.

3. Operational excellence becomes the differentiator
The winning model isn't "the newest analyzer." It's a reliable diagnostic system: trained staff, clean workflows, consistent documentation, thoughtful patient messaging, and strong follow-up.

Closing: diagnostics as a strategic capability

In 2026, physician office diagnostics sits at the intersection of clinical quality, patient experience, and business stability. Primary care, pediatrics, OBGYN, dermatology, and pain management each have specialty-specific needs—but all benefit from the same core strategy:

Build a diagnostic ecosystem that produces actionable answers within the timeframe that changes care. Align it to clinical pathways, staff it sustainably, keep it compliant, capture results cleanly, and communicate clearly.

If you do that, in-office diagnostics becomes more than testing—it becomes a practice-level advantage during a time when speed, trust, and reliability matter more than ever.

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STREP TESTS

BD VERITOR™ SYSTEM FOR RAPID DETECTION OF SARS-COV-2 & FLU A+B* (EUA) TEST

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The BD Veritor™ Plus System streamlines clinical and patient workflows by detecting three key respiratory viruses in one test, reducing the need for multiple sample collections. With multiple testing modes and workflow efficiencies, the analyzer empowers convenience and efficiency (1 kit = 30 tests).



*In the USA, the BD Veritor™ System for Rapid Detection of SARS-CoV-2 & Flu A+B has not been FDA cleared or approved but has been authorized by the FDA under an Emergency Use Authorization for use by authorized laboratories; use by laboratories certified under the CLIA, 42 U.S.C. §263a, that meet requirements to perform moderate, high, or waived complexity tests. The product is authorized for use at the Point of Care (POC), i.e., in patient care settings operating under a CLIA Certificate of Waiver, Certificate of Compliance, or Certificate of Accreditation.

This product has been authorized only for the detection of proteins from SARS-CoV-2, influenza A and influenza B, not for any other viruses or pathogens; and, in the USA, the emergency use of this product is only authorized for the duration of the declaration that circumstances exist justifying the authorization of emergency use of in vitro diagnostics for detection and/or diagnosis of COVID 19 under Section 564(b)(1) of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, 21 U.S.C. §360bbb-3(b)(1), unless the declaration is terminated or authorization is revoked sooner.

1. BD Veritor™ Plus System for Rapid Detection of SARS-CoV-2 and Flu A+B. Package insert. 500051910 Becton, Dickinson and Company.

OSOM® ULTRA STREP A TEST

From Sekisui Diagnostics

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from Newman Medical

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- If left untreated, 25% of patients with PAD will experience a heart attack or stroke within 5 years.
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- With a push-button remote, automatic calculations, and waveforms, it's incredibly user-friendly.
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- Medicare reimbursements vary by exam and location, averaging from $91 to $174.



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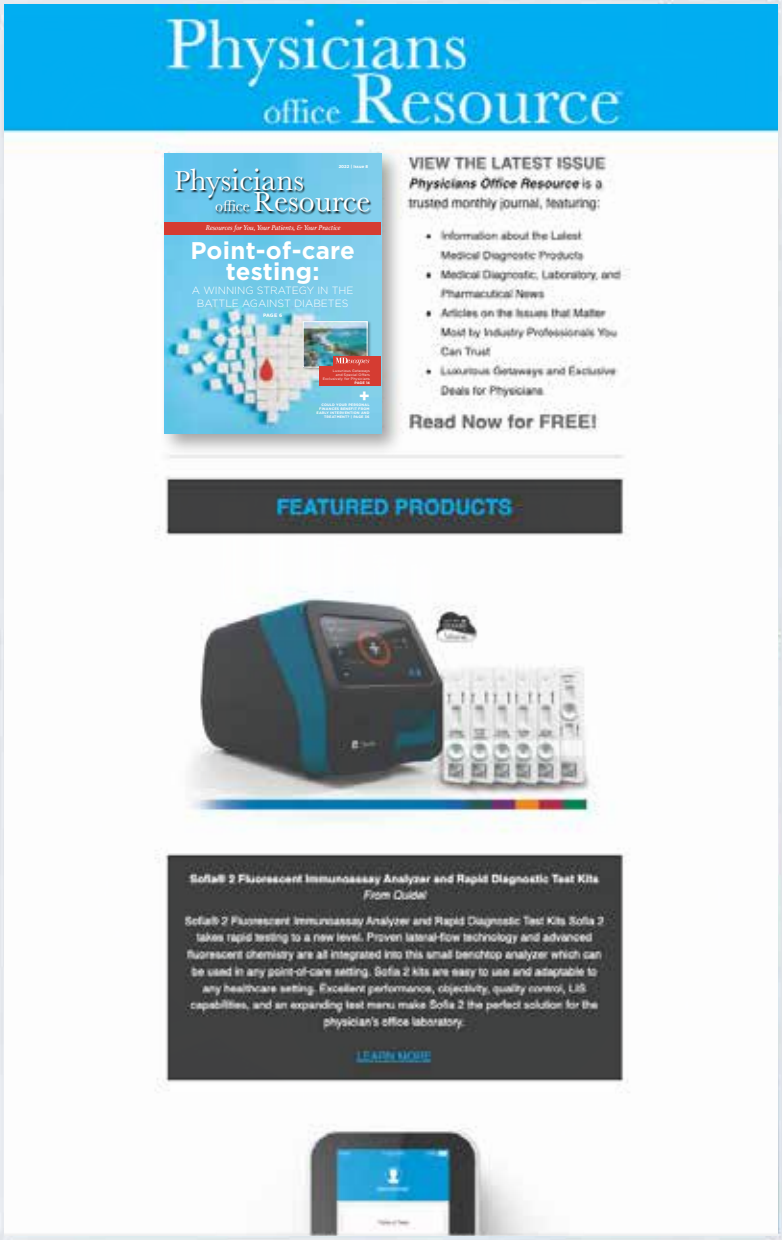
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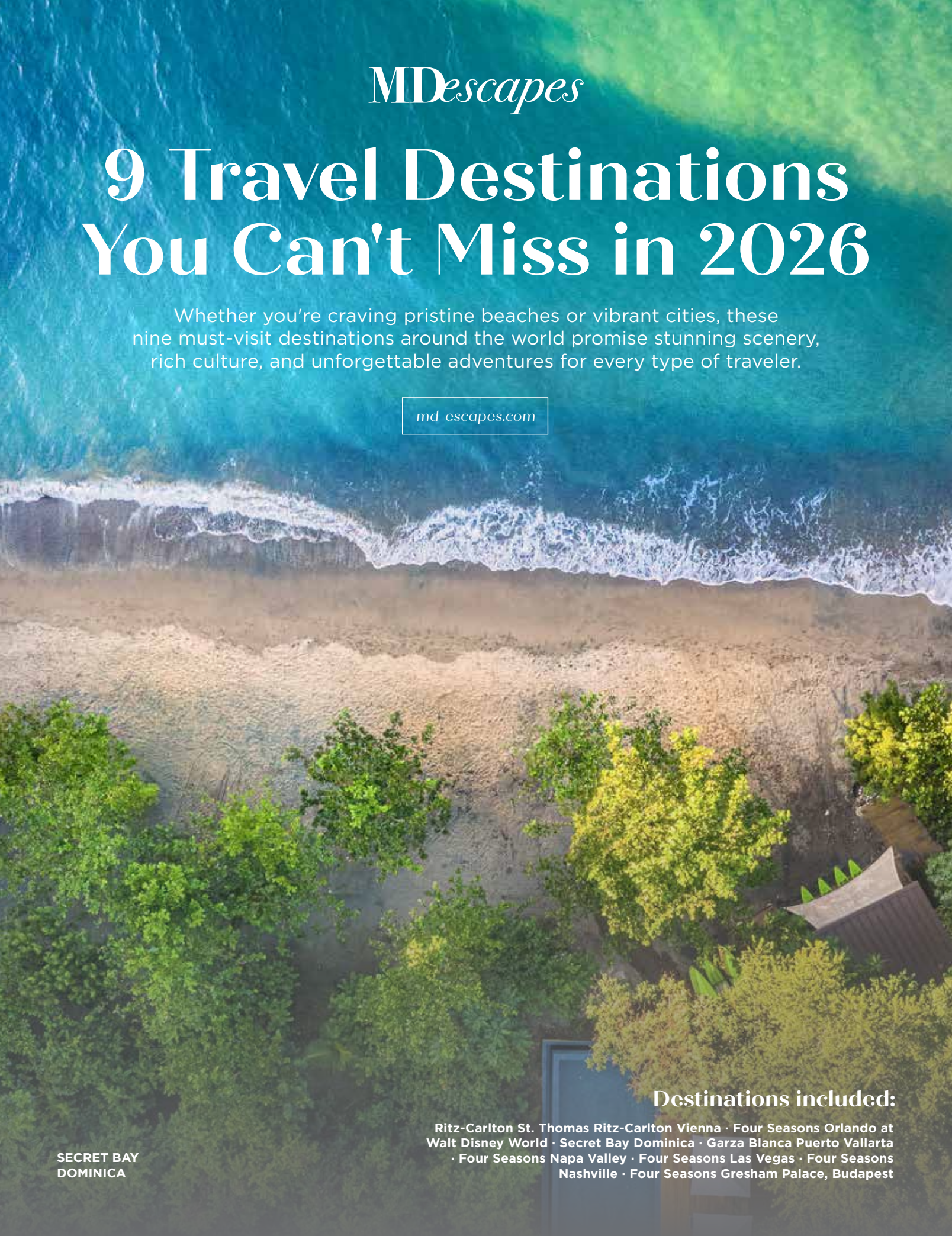
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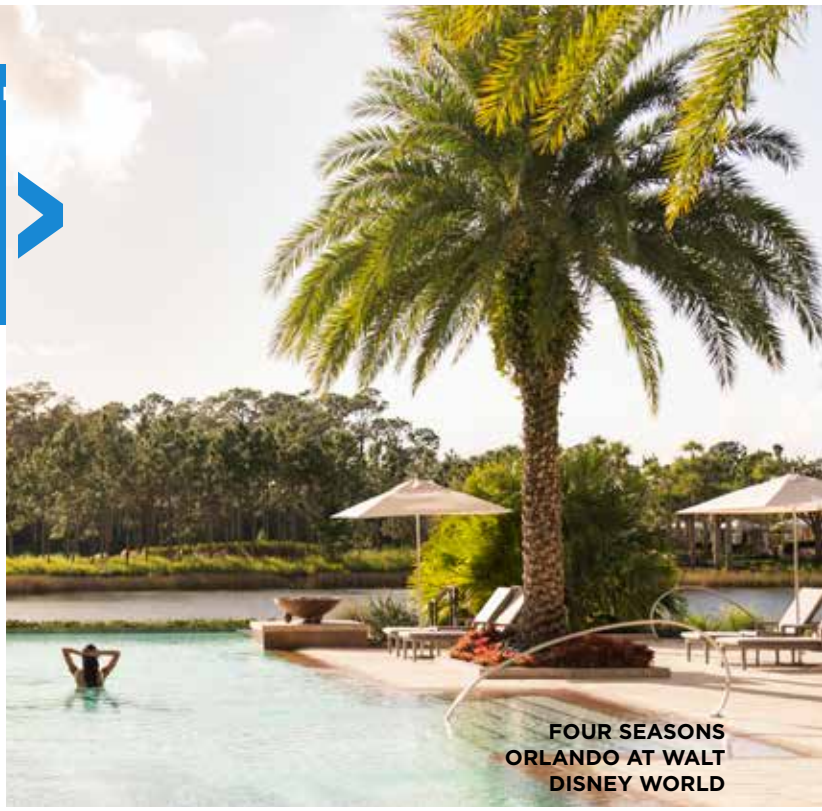
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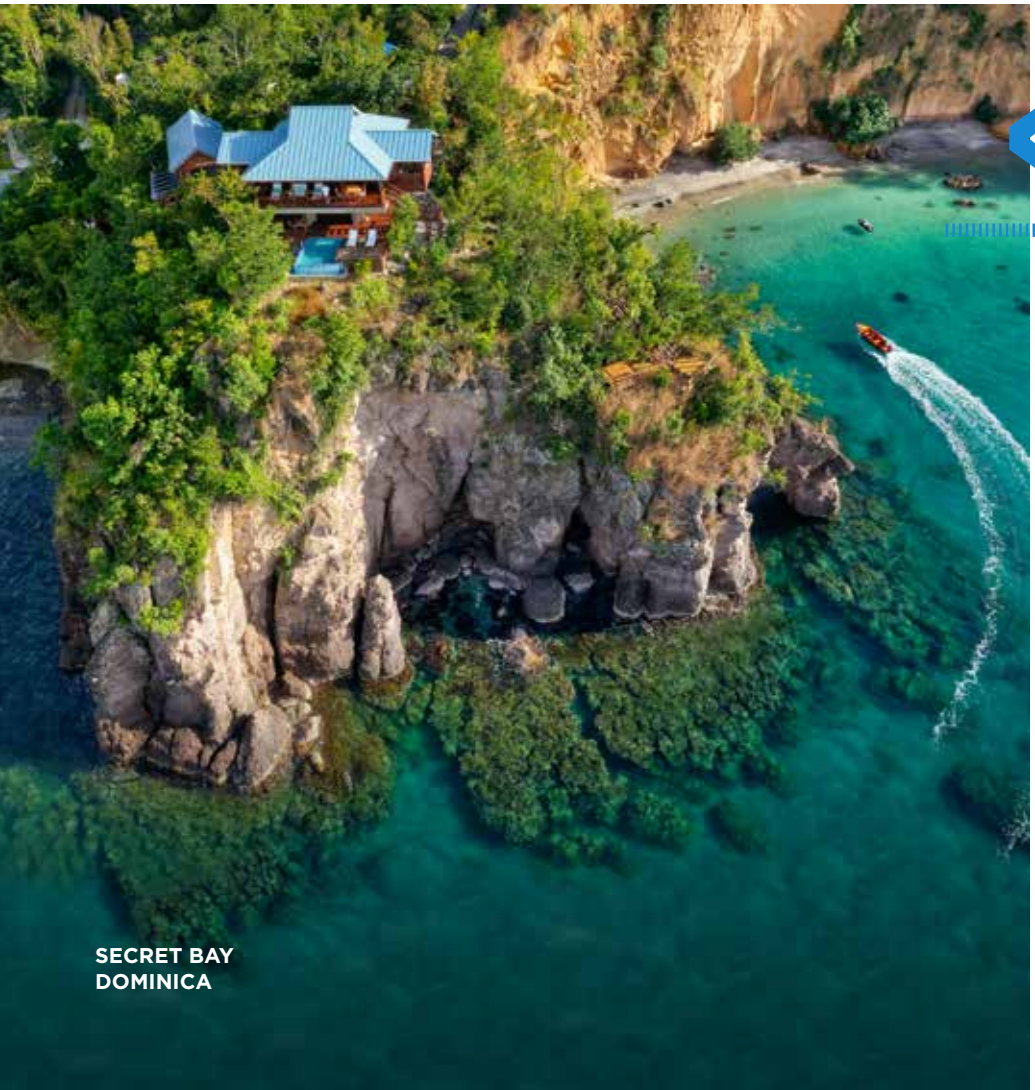
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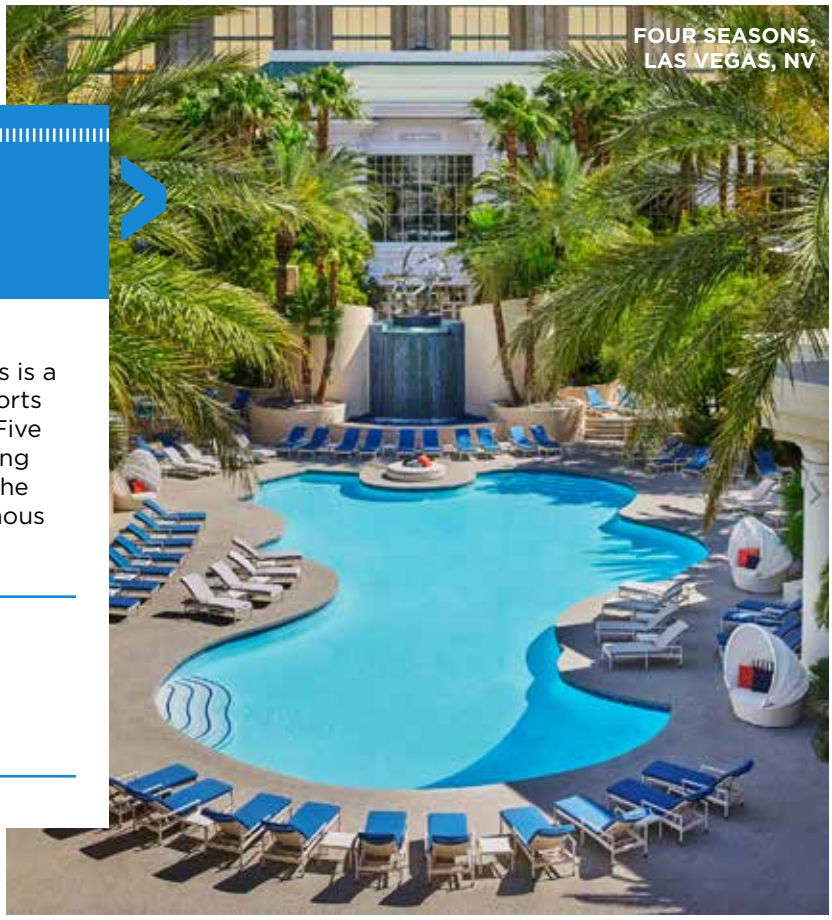


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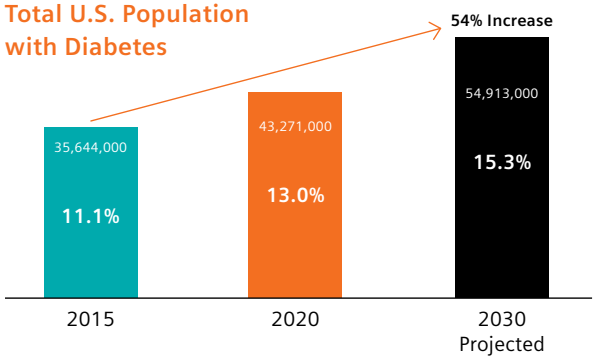
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1. Rowley, William R et al. "Diabetes 2030: Insights from Yesterday, Today, and Future Trends." Population health management vol. 20,1 (2017): 6-12. doi:10.1089/pop.2015.0181.

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CITY of SECRETS

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL PRAGUE

BY SENIOR TRAVEL EDITOR, BRANDI BROWER

A THREE-PART SERIES



Sadness settles in at the end of any worthwhile journey; "all good things must come to an end" rings true. My travels through Central Europe's Golden Triangle have been unforgettable, with just one stop remaining. After perfect days in Budapest and Vienna, rain is forecast for my final destination. I share my disappointment with a Czech fellow passenger, who reassures me that the weather will be ideal for my visit. The City of a Hundred Spires, with its splendid architecture, gains character from brooding clouds. The heavy sky will make the dramatic buildings of my last stop appear somber and romantic, adding mystery.

Prague

My cab ride from Prague's station to the hotel is nondescript, but any doubts vanish upon arrival at the Four Seasons Hotel Prague. Here, location indeed matters: centrally placed in Old Town, on the Vltava River, overlooking Prague Castle, and near the Charles Bridge. This proximity is perfect for exploring an already walkable city.

The bellman assists me with my luggage and directs me to the reception. The striking floral arrangement in the lobby is the first clue I'm at a Four Seasons property, as it seems to be a signature style element for the brand. The energy is noticeable, soft voices and giggles signal that something is afoot. I soon learn that the excitement had just passed me by, literally. A well-known novelist whom I had barely missed seeing, Dan Brown. The best-selling author is famous for his mystery thrillers. One of them, The Da Vinci Code, became a cultural phenomenon, selling over 80 million copies, being translated into 44 languages, and consistently ranking among the best-selling books of all time. Yup, that Dan Brown. Timing in life is everything, and my timing was just seconds off. But my curiosity was intact, and I had to discover the mystery of the mystery writer's residency at this posh Prague hotel.

Interest sparked, I quickly learn that the secretive stay is integral to The Secret of Secrets, the title of Dan Brown's latest novel, which was being launched. Apparently, the Four Seasons Hotel provided exceptional accommodations for the lauded literary star. At the same time, he researched his latest project because the hotel was one of the book's central locations. Not only does the main fictional character, Robert Langdon, stay in the hotel's lavish Royal Suite, but at a high-stakes moment in the book, he jumps out of the window of his hotel room into the Vltava River below. The author's choice to use Prague's mystique is intentional, combining the capital's deep roots in alchemy, occultism, and dark legends with its carefully preserved Gothic and Baroque architecture and a sense of the supernatural within its haunting atmosphere. In many ways, the city itself appears as a character in its own right.

To truly appreciate the setting, I consider details about the protagonist's Royal Suite, one of 19 exceptional quarters, this space features a fireplace, a dining room for eight, and a living room





with a baby grand piano. It's situated within the 16th-century Riverside villa portion of the hotel. The hotel has seven floors and 157 rooms, situated across three historic wings representing different architectural eras: Baroque, Neo-Classical, and Neo-Renaissance, dating back to the 18th century, as well as a modern building that blends these distinct structures, completed in 2001. While I may not be staying in the Royal Suite, my room is perfectly appointed. Upon entering, I'm impressed by the traditional Czech-style paneling and molding, hand-painted stenciling on the high ceiling, Bohemian crystal chandeliers, and huge windows decorated with thoughtful treatments. It feels like I've taken a trip back in time. A modern marble bathroom, including a soaking tub and a separate shower, rounds out the residential space, which is complemented by a beautiful light blue and celandine color scheme. On the desk, a sweet welcome gift, a chocolate clock tower, painted in gold, dare I say a confectionery clue. It's patterned after Prague's Astronomical Clock, just one of the many mystical must-sees during my stay.

"Every city has its secrets, but in Prague, they feel older than time itself... walking across the bridge, especially at either dusk or sunset, is like walking into a different era in time," Dan Brown is quoted as saying. Not only does he consider the city to be the "mystical capital of Europe," but his adoration continues, "I happen to think it is one of the - if not the most beautiful city in the world. It is just magical." With the inspira-



tion of the famed mystery author, I'm intent on uncovering and sharing all of the allure and secrets of this magical city.

At sunset, I walk from the hotel to the 14th-century Charles Bridge. In the square, a statue of King Charles IV, the educated, numerology-believing Bohemian king, stands tall. Royal astronomers advised him, using the palindrome number 135797531, to start the bridge's construction at 5:31 am on July 9, 1357. Those numbers, carved into the Old Town Bridge Tower, are said to protect it. The medieval sandstone bridge, connecting Old Town and Lesser Town, is lined with 30 Baroque statues and spans a third of a mile, symbolizing Prague's beauty and strength. Tonight, saints' statuary casts lengthy shadows from the gas lamps, and the rain's mist, and the atmosphere is both mystical and chilling. I head for the hotel, planning to explore more by daylight.

After my evening walk, a meal at Cottocrudo, the hotel's refined Italian restaurant and bar, is the perfect end to a long travel day. The rain has stopped, so I accept a patio table overlooking the glowing castle on the hill. After a savory amuse-bouche, Denys, the assistant manager, helps me choose dinner. I ordered burrata with stone fruit, followed by wagyu bolognese with fresh pasta, just delicious. Now, it's time to make plans. The Four Seasons provides numerous experiences to enrich your stay in Prague, ranging from hiking excursions and day trips to learning about Bohemian Crystal or ringing the bell at St. Vitus Cathedral. With the concierge's help, Anna arranges a private guided tour for the next day. Local knowledge will help me crack the code of this captivating city.

My sweet, mild server, Lucie, with a soft smile, pours freshly squeezed grapefruit juice after delivering my yogurt muesli and chocolate croissant. I will wake up earlier tomorrow to enjoy the breakfast buffet at Cottocrudo, but just a quick bite today. In the lobby, I meet Miriam, my tour guide. The Czech-raised, history major, is bright and witty and knows her Prague. We cross the Charles Bridge and the Lesser Town Bridge Tower, a monumental, gated entrance to Malá Strana (Lesser Town). This landmark offers panoramic views, features architectural styles from the past, and marks the entrance to the historic Royal Way. Lesser Town feels like the Harry Potter movies with its narrow, winding stone streets, moody gothic architecture, and, in particular, the historic, lantern-lit atmosphere of Nerudova Street. The street is known for its historic house symbols, such as the golden key or red eagle, used before modern numbering. A detail that is consistent with Dan Brown's themes of codes, symbols, and hidden meanings in architecture. The area resembles a magical, centuries-old village; it feels like exploring Diagon Alley or Hogsmeade from the popular Harry Potter books, with the imposing Prague Castle as a backdrop that

resembles Hogwarts itself.

We catch a trolley up to the Strahov Monastery, take in an incredible view of the Prague districts, and the lay of the land to get our bearings before continuing. We move on to Prague Castle, the largest castle complex in the world, which you can easily spend days exploring just the castle grounds. Schwarzenberg Palace, St. Wenceslas Chapel, and St. Vitus Cathedral, which features the 14th-century Last Judgment located above the Golden Gate, is composed of approximately one million small glass tiles. Completed in 1371, this 1,000-square-foot artwork features over 30 shades of color in its impressive mosaic. Housed within the famous Cathedral is the 17-ton Sigismund Bell (Zikmund), the largest bell in the Czech Republic. Legend says that if the bell's clapper breaks, disaster follows, as happened before the 2002 floods that almost broke the Charles Bridge. It sounds like some Czech legends are true. Golden Lane, with its little colorful dwellings, each apartment depicting life from a different era, was the ghetto section of the castle grounds where the guards and servants used to live. Ending at the beautiful stained-glass Great South Tower and the Old Royal Palace, and viewing the rarely exhibited Bohemian Crown Jewels, was a happy accident while I was at Vladislav Hall. The exhibition shares the dramatic history of the jewels during World War II, and The Seven Locks: The reinforced door to the chamber requires seven different keys to be opened by the key holders, seven people in notable positions, including the President of the Czech Republic and the Archbishop of Prague.

Too much to see in one day, I arrange another tour with Miriam for the next morning, and we part ways. I meander the narrow streets of District 1, eyes constantly scanning the sky, absorbing the incredible architecture and detail, ending at Čertovka (the Devil's Channel), the famous 12th-century waterway, also known as Little Prague Venice, before climbing up stairs to the Charles Bridge to return to the comfort of the Four Seasons Hotel. Every site visited today is used in Brown's book. It's no mystery to me now why the popular writer chose this city of secrets as the perfect setting for his novel; this alluring capital has already captured my imagination.

The concierge suggests I walk to Staré Město (Old Town district) and enjoy a traditional Czech dinner. He gives me directions to Old Town Square, and I walk to the suggested Restaurace Mincovana. My waiter, Taras, is great at helping me decipher the menu and makes suggestions for a worthwhile first taste of this region's cuisine. I was pleasantly satisfied with my choice of svickova na smetane (beef in cream sauce), a traditional Czech and Slovak dish. After dining, I take in a sneak peek of what's ahead on tomorrow's tour. Prague's Old Town Square is a lively hub, where natives and tourists alike are buzzing, heading to the numerous cafes, restaurants, and bars that line the square and narrow, winding medieval side streets. But I've eaten, so my pace is slow and thoughtful as I cross the cobblestone surface, imagining steps taken by emperors, merchants, and artists, long ago. I admire the landmark buildings where floodlit Gothic and Baroque architecture creates a dramatic, fairy-tale atmosphere, a more peaceful preview of Prague's historic Old Town Square.



Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts continually selects staff who enhance the hotel experience. Jana, a bubbly server with a great sense of humor, adds levity to the morning and lends proof to my theory. I'm seated at the window, overlooking the small tour boats on the river, gliding underneath the Charles Bridge. After taking another look at the incredible breakfast buffet, with its delicious hot and cold selections and perfect pastries, including the popular Kolaches, I am enticed. Still, I opt for French toast off the menu, which doesn't disappoint. One can also argue that Four Seasons' food is an additional favored feature of the famed brand.

Miriam shared Josefov, the remaining preserved part of the Jewish Ghetto district, and the Old-New Synagogue, which is the oldest active synagogue in the world. According to 16th-century Jewish legend, Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel created a clay giant, the Golem, to protect the community from persecution. The myth holds that the creature was created from clay taken from the banks of the Vltava River, and that its remains are still hidden in the attic of the Old-New Synagogue. This fabled character is reimagined within the pages of Secret of Secrets. A sobering moment, the Old Jewish Cemetery, among the oldest surviving Jewish burial grounds in the world. The oldest gravestone is that of a rabbi, dated 1439. There are around 100,000 bodies buried there, many of which were stacked 12 layers deep; as a result, the surface of the cemetery



is raised many feet higher than the surface of the surrounding streets.

The Astronomical Clock, known as Orloj, is the most-visited place in Prague, attracting 700,000 visitors annually. Miriam shares that it's the oldest working clock in the world, with a mechanical mechanism dating back to 1410. She explains in detail how to read the clock, as well as the symbolism of the walk of the 12 disciples, and the four allegorical figures: Death, Vanity, Greed, and Lust, representing vices or medieval social fears, that all appear when the clock strikes. Orloj is prominently featured on the pages of Brown's thriller; central to the mystery, the clock's real medieval and celestial symbolism is combined with a fictional conspiracy involving hidden messages and ancient mythology, acting as an entrance to Prague's hidden, esoteric history.

The labyrinth of streets, transitioning between Old Town and New Town, walking through the old Gothic Powder Tower, built in 1475 as one of the 13 city gates, which was the starting point of the coronation procession of Bohemian kings, and now it's just two women making their way back to the hotel. We pass the Dvořák Hall, the gorgeous art nouveau concert hall, Wenceslas Square, the site of the 1989 Velvet Revolution protests that ended communist rule, ending at the Prague's Klementinum, the Baroque library, a 17th century Jesuit hall housing over 20,000 theological volumes, antique globes, and an astrological tower which is a key setting for the protagonist Robert Langdon, depicted as a place of abandoned knowledge, bridging science, alchemy and mysticism. I feel the last two days I've been on a "Live Like Langdon" trail. With my head full of history and bohemian beauty, I bid my guide adieu and make my way back to the Four Seasons for some serious self-care at the AVA Spa.

Mahsa, the lovely spa hostess, introduces me to the fabulous facilities, explaining that all the treatment rooms are named after Czech rivers, because water is healing. My indulgence begins in the steam room with eucalyptus to clear my passages, then moves to the dry sauna, and ends in the large spa room, where the vitality pool, at a perfect 91 degrees, features different sections of jets that stimulate various parts of the body, both invigorating and relaxing. The spa windows have a direct line of sight to the beautiful Prague Castle, where I gazed while sipping my tea, near the fireplace, wrapped in my Four Seasons robe, awaiting my therapist to pick me up. Denisa led me to the Svitava treatment room, where she skillfully performed the Alchemy Dream Ritual, one of the Czech Signature treatments. This ritual brings deep relaxation to tense muscles and nerves, removes blockages, and dissolves stress. After my treatment, the music felt ethereal, and the three chimes rang, indicating the conclusion of the experience. For a moment, I felt like I had died and was in heaven. Transcendent.

The rejuvenation of the phenomenal spa experience would be the ultimate highlight of the visit. Four Seasons had one more magical experience to mesmerize me with, MIRU. The seasonal pop-up Japanese restaurant is described as a "rare summer ritual" because it typically operates from late May through mid-September. As fate would have it, I was one of the lucky ones, favored to enjoy the flavors of MIRU on this evening. The exclusivity of the eatery, a highly intimate encounter

featuring just four tables, is set on the hotel's rooftop terrace, a transformed space inspired by a Japanese garden. You feel like you've been invited to a secret event, where a nine-course degustation menu, rooted in the Nikkei concept, which is the traditional Japanese techniques with a touch of Peruvian ingredients, is on full display. Blend the artistry of the cuisine, the privacy of the space, and the attentiveness of the staff, with the backdrop of the Prague skyline, that's the secret of secrets.

I'm told to arrive at the rooftop at 6:00 p.m. sharp. Maria and Jaroslav will be attending to me for the evening. Oshiburi, a warm towel infused with lemongrass, is offered to prepare for the meal. A starter of edamame with a sprinkle of red pepper follows. Two sticky rice offerings are served before chutoro tartare, with caviar/wasabi soy and gold leaf. Sea bass usuzukuri, yuzu miso black cod, and wagyu tataki, followed by the nigiri selection of tuna truffle, creamy salmon, and sea-bream yuzu. My favorite dish of the night was the roasted turbot. A lovely palette cleanser: yuzu chantilly, coconut and lime granita with candied ginger; for dessert, jasmine cream, wasabi sponge, and pineapple vanilla compote with sake sorbet. You can enhance the dining experience with mindfully curated beverage pairings. I chose to soak in the incredible scenery as a complement to the meal. I was under the spell of the Prague skyline as the dinner was seamless from sunset until the moon appeared high above the castle spires. It being a four-hour gastronomic affair, I suggest it's even sweeter when shared with another. Everything about this five-star luxury hotel would be sweeter when shared with another. I hope to return with the one I love.

During Dan Brown's visit to Prague, when our paths almost crossed in the Four Seasons lobby, he declared his new novel a "love letter" to the city, calling it a captivating, historic, and romantic destination. He celebrated its ancient streets, stunning architecture, and deep mysteries, calling it a "companion" and "refuge." Brown described Prague as a place where he left his heart, expressing that his love for the city deepens with every visit.

As I cross the Charles Bridge one last time before I catch my plane home, I overhear a tour guide instructing her travelers in front of a statue of St. John of Nepomuk. She tells her small crowd that rubbing the shiny bronze plaque at the base of the statue, which depicts his martyrdom, is believed to guarantee a return trip to the city and bring good luck.

Prague, the City of a Hundred Spires, is a breathtaking, well-preserved medieval gem on the Vltava River, with the blended beauty of Gothic, Baroque, and Renaissance architecture, and the blessing of surviving major wars. A wonderful walkable city with its dramatic castle views and fairy tale vibes, mysteries shrouded in centuries-old lore and legends, all wrapped in a mystical atmosphere. What an incredible city of secrets, I think to myself, as I reach out to rub the shiny bronze plaque. Not just for luck, but because I wish to come back.



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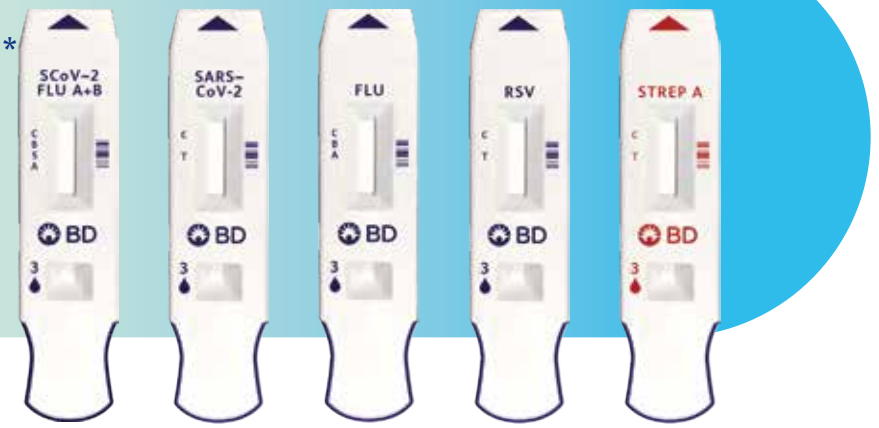
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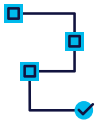
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