

Suburban retina docs look to D.C. for expansion

By Ben Fischer

The Retina Group of Washington, one of the region's largest private retina subspecialty practices, is scouting locations for its first office inside the District as part of an ongoing expansion.

The 20-doctor practice — which has focused on the suburbs in the past — opened its 10th and 11th locations in recent months, acquiring an independent practice in Fredericksburg, Va., in late 2010 and opening a Silver Spring office in January.

Co-managing partners Rich Garfinkel and Reg Sanders said they want to have a D.C. office open by January 2012. Independent retina physicians in the District have contacted them about merging, they said.

“The hardest part is really to figure out where to put it,” Garfinkel said. “It’s just a place we should be. The Retina Group of Washington should be in the District.”

Retina experts are ophthalmologists who specialize in diseases of the retina, the light-sensitive area in the back of the eye.

Exact specifications for the space would be determined as the plan for D.C. develops.

Retina Group also is in talks that could lead to a merger with a retina specialist in Hagerstown, Md.

With that deal, Retina Group would have a geographic footprint extending nearly 120 miles north to south and provide the practice with a larger base of patients, Sanders said.

Founded in 1982, the Retina Group treats about 33,000 patients a year. Its physicians practice at MedStar Health-owned hospitals in D.C., Inova Health System facilities and Virginia Hospital Center in Virginia, Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, among others.

Sanders and Garfinkel declined to disclose revenue, other than to say it is up 24 percent in the last three years.



Retina Group co-managing partners Rich Garfinkel, top, and Reg Sanders say they want to be in D.C. by early next year.