

Daily Camera Article – January 2017
Second Opinion Offers Peace of Mind
By Gerra Lewis – Grillo Health Information Center

Q. I have been diagnosed with a serious illness. Before beginning treatment, I would like to get a second opinion but don't want to upset my doctor. When is it appropriate to seek a second opinion? What is the best way to proceed?

A. Do not hesitate to get a second opinion for fear of offending your physician. Let your doctor know you want one. Most doctors understand the value of another professional opinion and will be supportive. Learning about your situation, getting a second opinion and weighing your options is a reasonable approach to dealing with your illness.

It is appropriate to seek a second opinion when:

- You have cancer or any serious illness
- You have received a diagnosis that significantly affects your quality of life
- Your insurance company requires you to get a second opinion before receiving treatment
- You're not feeling confident about your doctor's diagnosis or treatment recommendation

Some ways to find a second-opinion doctor:

- Ask your current physician
- Check with local hospitals/medical clinics
- Obtain a list of approved doctors from your insurance company
- Access medical association websites with searchable databases of doctors
- Check websites of patient advocate groups that address your condition
- Utilize Medicare.gov's searchable database of doctors who accept Medicare
- Ask friends/family members

Once you identify a possible doctor, call the office to ask about the doctor's area of specialty and credentials, such as board certification, training, and experience with your illness.

Before making an appointment, check with your insurance provider regarding coverage of second opinions.

Things to do before for your appointment:

- Have your medical records and test results forwarded or take them to the appointment
- Take your physician's contact information, a list of your current medications and allergies, and your insurance card
- Prepare specific questions
- Take another person with you, if possible, and be prepared to write notes
- Ask for clarification if the doctor says something you don't understand

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- Ask the physician to send his notes/recommendations to both you and your doctor

By seeking a second opinion, you gain additional knowledge about your condition and your options. You are then better equipped to make informed decisions that may have long-term consequences. The opinion provided by a second physician may agree with the diagnosis and treatment identified by your doctor, thus providing you with reassurance, peace of mind and confidence that you are making good health choices.

*Gerra Lewis volunteers at the **Grillo Center**, which offers free, confidential research to assist in health understanding and decisions. **To use this service, contact us at www.GrilloCenter.org, 720-854-7293 or 4715 Arapahoe Ave, Boulder.** No research or assistance should be interpreted as medical advice. We encourage informed consultation with your health care provider.*

Where to find it:

Patient Advocate Foundation:

(<http://patientadvocate.org/help.php/index.php?p=691>)

Google: patient advocate second

American Society of Clinical Oncology:

(<http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/cancer-basics/cancer-care-team/seeking-second-opinion>)

Google: cancer.net seeking a second opinion

American Heart Association:

(http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/MyHeartandStrokeNews/Getting-a-Second-Medical-Opinion_UCM_434325_Article.jsp#mainContent)

Google: heart.org second medical opinion

Cleveland Clinic:

(<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/2014/11/why-you-should-consider-a-second-medical-opinion/>)

Google: health options second opinion