

Cancer Pays Another Visit

Joan Calkin (a pseudonym) had ten good years. Diagnosed with breast cancer in 1983, she was treated with breast conserving surgery. No radiation. And the cancer was kept at bay through the turn of the century. In the summer of 2004, however, Calkin developed a cough. Her doctors discovered multiple small lung nodules: malignant cells consistent with breast cancer. The cancer was back.

Calkin experienced frightening symptoms: a ten-pound weight loss, pain in the chest, and voice loss, apparently due to vocal chord paralysis. She was already taking tamoxifen, a drug that is sometimes capable of slowing or preventing the recurrence of breast cancer. But her doctors were talking about more serious alternatives. Chemotherapy. Calkin had chemotherapy after her first bout with cancer. The treatment had been discontinued at that time. The drug combination she had been taking was too toxic. Now Calkin wondered if she would have to go through all that again. She needed a second opinion. Like millions of people with health problems, she went online. There, she discovered the second-opinion experts: Cleveland Clinic **MyConsult**.

At **MyConsult**, Calkin only needed to answer two online questionnaires and then forward her medical records and test results to Cleveland Clinic for review by the expert oncologists at Cleveland Clinic. These oncologists were part of Cleveland Clinic Taussig Cancer Center, Ohio's largest cancer practice, and – according to U.S. News & World Report -- one of the nation's best.

The Cleveland Clinic oncologist thoroughly reviewed Calkin's records and sent her a detailed analysis. His second opinion agreed with the diagnosis and the treatment she was currently receiving, based on her response. He noted that metastatic breast cancer is usually treated as a chronic condition calling for ongoing treatment, and that life expectancy for women with this condition is in the range of three or four years. The good news was that Calkin appeared to have several good prognostic features, including the long interval between her first diagnosis of cancer and the recurrence. He expressed the opinion that she might very well do better than the average. Further recommendations included diagnostic evaluations to better understand the possible causes of Calkin's vocal loss, chest pains and weight loss.

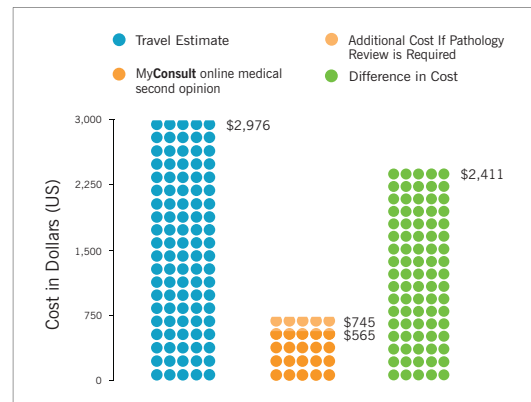
The good news for Calkin was that her **MyConsult** second opinion oncologist did NOT recommend extensive chemotherapy. He did recommend that she continue with tamoxifen and have her response closely monitored. Hormonal treatment for her condition might be necessary later, depending on the durability of her response to tamoxifen. Only if tamoxifen ceased to work, and hormonal therapy failed, should chemotherapy be considered. The oncologist went on to name the chemotherapeutic agents he believed would be most effective, noting that the decision of which to use would depend largely on the side-effect profiles and her overall health condition. Calkin lived a great distance from Cleveland Clinic. But she didn't have to travel to get this expert advice. It came to her right in her study, over her computer. Now, she could proceed with confidence to the next stage of treatment with her local doctors, knowing that – for now at least – extensive chemotherapy was not a necessary option.

The following average cost statistics of traveling to the Cleveland Clinic from Anchorage, Alaska is based on the demographic information of the previous **MyConsult** patient testimonial.

Anchorage, AK to Cleveland Clinic (approx. 3,914 mi.)
Average price for two people traveling to the Cleveland Clinic:

\$2,350.....	Roundtrip Flight for 4 days
\$426.....	Hotel Stay 4 day, 3 nights
\$200.....	Food/Drink 4 days
\$2,976.....	Total Trip Estimate
\$565.....	MyConsult Online Medical Second Opinion
\$2,411.....	Difference in Cost

(Prices are based on an average stay in the City of Cleveland and may vary depending on time of year, length of stay, and advance booking of flight.) October, 2008, v1



Cost of a **MyConsult** Online Medical Second Opinion vs. Cost of Travel

To learn more about Cleveland Clinic's **MyConsult** program, visit www.ClevelandClinic.org/myconsult. Registering is easy, and if you choose to seek an online medical second opinion through Cleveland Clinic, the entire process should take 30-45 minutes. You may also contact the **MyConsult** office at 216.444.3223 or 800.223.2273 ext 43223.