ARE TWO HEADS BETTER THAN ONE?

The Use and Utility of Second Opinions
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Second Opinions

+ Doctors get second opinions
+ Patients want second opinions: I certainly did
+ Medical Second opinions: Who gets them and why?
+ Are the useful?
+ What more do we need to know about them?
Radiology – Second opinions

- 20,286 cases
- 14 facilities
- Disagreement on difficult cases 2.8%; on routine cases 0.8%

- Metaanalysis of double readings in radiology found a discrepancy rate ranging from 0.4% to 22% depending on the type of study

J Am Coll Radiol 2004, Insights Imaging 2018
Pathology – Second opinions

- 71,811 cases seen between 2005 and 2010 at Mayo Clinic
- Reread in 2010
- Major disagreements in only 457 cases – 0.6%
- Follow up tissue was obtained for 86 cases, producing a different diagnosis in 13 cases
- Treatment was affected in 90% of cases
- Prognosis was affected in 92% of cases

Arch Pathol Lab Med. 2013
Who gets a second opinion?

More women than men: 21% v 16%

Middle aged: 45-64  21%

65 and over:        23%

Most had some college: 22%

Many had graduated:  19%

“I already diagnosed myself on the Internet. I’m only here for a second opinion.”
Who gets a second opinion?

Many considered their health
Fair  28%
Poor  34%
Had health problems:  36%
And had a regular doctor:  20%

Health Affairs 1999

A patient story

- A 53 yo woman goes for routine screening colonoscopy...
A patient story

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Why get a second opinion?

- Confirm the diagnosis
- Seek different treatment options
- Dissatisfaction with the initial consultation
- Desire for additional information
- Get a diagnosis

MayoClinProc 2014
Second opinions for cancer patients:

- Patients with cancer wanted additional information:
  - About the disease 33-89%
  - About treatment 70-97%
  - About prognosis 93%

MayoClinPorc 2014

Predictors of second opinions among cancer patients:

- Radiation therapy
- Late stage disease
- Tertiary level education

MayoClinPorc 2014
Second opinions recommendations:

- Change in treatment: 32-42%
- Prostate cancer: recommended surgery 91% v 71%
- Elective surgery: 34% did not recommend the proposed surgery

MayoClinPorc 2014

Patients seeking second opinions for medical conditions

- Most presented for reevaluation of common symptoms such as fatigue or abdominal pain
- Only 10% of patient had a new diagnosis established

MayoClinPorc 2014
Patient satisfaction from the second opinion

- In cancer patient,
  - Reassurance about the diagnosis or treatment
  - Patient involvement in decision making
  - The demeanor of the physician

MayoClinPorc 2014

Patient satisfaction from the second opinion

- In medicine patients
  - Confirmation of the diagnosis
  - Information and emotional support provided by the second doctor

MayoClinPorc 2014
Does getting a second opinion change outcomes?

- Partners Online Consulting:
  - 79 patients
  - 90% were cancer related
  - 68% resulted in new chemotherapeutic recommendations
  - 5% resulted in a change in diagnosis
  - Average turnaround time was less than 7 working days

BMJ 2003

Does getting a second opinion change outcomes?

- Best Doctors study
  - 6791 patients
  - 37% were given new treatment recommendations
  - 14% were given a new diagnosis
  - 10% had changes in both
  - Changes were moderate or major in 21% of the diagnostic changes 31% of the treatment changes

Am J Med 2015
Does getting a second opinion change outcomes?

- German Testicular Cancer Study Group
  - 1284 patients over 5 years
  - 12% of all testicular cancer cases in the country
  - 39.4% had discrepancies in the diagnosis given
  - Discrepancies resulted in less invasive surgery in 28% and in more extensive surgery in 15.6%
  - Patients treated in this program had a 2 year progression free survival rate of 90.4%

Onc Rept 2014

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- What are the qualities of a good second opinion provider?
- Should the doctor providing the second opinion be informed of the opinion of the first doctor?