**3 Reasons to always seek a second opinion**

I had a family friend whose cancer reoccurred and was causing him a lot of discomfort. In desperation, his daughter dropped her kids with me so she could take him to another hospital for a second opinion. As she was getting the kids out of the car, her father looked at me and said, “I feel guilty going to another doctor. Won’t my doctor’s feelings be hurt?” I looked at him and exclaimed, “absolutely not, you are doing the right thing.” This is a common fear but getting a second opinion when diagnosed with any illness is a best practice. The Mayo Clinic published an insightful study in 2017 that showed in circumstances of 286 patients referred to them for a second opinion due to diagnostic uncertainty, only 36 patients out of 286 (12%) were provided the same diagnosis as their previous provider.

Getting a second opinion offers many advantages, but the three most significant are:

1. Diagnosis confirmation
2. Learning about alternative treatment options
3. Improving your confidence to move forward

It’s estimated 50-70% of Americans don’t get a second opinion after being diagnosed with a serious illness. In addition to not wanting to offend their doctor, other reasons patients cite for not getting a second opinion include:

* Fear it’s too expensive
* Taking too much time
* Anxiety about seeing a doctor they aren’t familiar with

While these worries are understandable, they are often unfounded. Many insurance companies cover second opinions because it could mean a better course of treatment or lower costs. Having a sense of urgency after receiving a cancer diagnosis is typical, you shouldn’t let it deter you from seeking a second opinion. Oncology offices understand the importance of time and will almost always make sure you are seen promptly to move the treatment process forward. Finally, some people become so comfortable with their doctor, they feel apprehension in seeking out someone new, especially if they are from a different hospital. Don’t make this mistake; my grandfather did, and it cost him his life. He was having chest pains, but when his doctor told him he was fine, he didn’t seek a second opinion. Shortly after that, he had a massive heart attack and died.

Being diagnosed with a serious illness is overwhelming and fear-provoking, which can cause us to default to the easiest course of action. Recognize while normal to feel this way, medicine is a practice, and as such, providers can have varying skill levels, training, and expertise. Seeking a second opinion is a great way to be an active participant in your care and will provide confirmation and confidence you are on the right path. You’ll be glad you took the step, and I assure you-your doctor expects nothing less.