



Medical second opinions now available online

Upload scans, x-rays and email doctors at some of the nation's top hospitals

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Published On: Jul 23 2013 11:04:29 PM EDT Updated On: Jul 29 2013 03:22:17 PM EDT

ORLANDO, Fla. It's a scary thought when you or your child needs surgery or risky medication. Most people want a second opinion, but appointments can be hard to get and sometimes or the best doctor is nowhere near home. High-tech house calls are now an option.

When a surgeon recently told Jenya Titova her mother would need shoulder surgery she immediately wanted a second opinion. She turned to a new website based in South Florida called "Secondopinions.com" which was started by radiologist Dr. Mike Yuz.

"For patients, the huge advantages are prevention of medical errors, prevention of unnecessary medical procedures, and for the whole healthcare system the main advantage is to obviously decrease healthcare costs which are out of control," said Yuz.

There are actually a lot of online options out there to put you in touch with the best specialists out there without ever leaving your house. Websites like the Cleveland Clinic, the world-renowned Massachusetts General Hospital. Even Johns Hopkins Medicine allows patients to upload x-ray and MRI images and reports to get answers over e-mail.

While various sites offer a written opinion, 2nd.MD says they're the only service that provides live doctor consults via video or phone with specialists from leading US institutions. They also offer an app on the iPhone. The creator of 2nd.MD says he began the service after his daughter suffered a stroke and he could not find a specialist to speak to.

Doctors suggest you ask every question you could think of via e-mail even asking whether doctors have all the information they need to make a proper second opinion. Most importantly, ask who to call if you have more follow up questions.

Titova was able to find out online the mass on her mother's liver was all clear. "We were reassured. No sleepless nights. No biopsies and completely with peace of mind," said Titova.

It's important to consider the cost on a web-based second opinion because insurance often won't pay for online consulting services. The Cleveland Clinic, for example, charges around five hundred dollars for a second opinion and if a pathologist is needed there is an additional charge of 180 dollars. **While those costs are higher than a standard co-pay, it's important to remember how crucial a second opinion can be. Studies have shown medical errors in the United States cost nearly 20 billion dollars each year.**