

## Patient Story | Aortic Root Aneurysm

### THE PRIMARY DIAGNOSIS

A middle-aged man with a history of rheumatoid arthritis completed an annual chest x-ray as part of his treatment plan, when he received an unexpected result. His doctor found what appeared to be an aortic root aneurysm, a weak spot in the largest blood vessel in his body. Aneurysms weaken the blood vessel wall and can cause life-threatening bleeding or block blood flow from the heart to the organs.

Faced with this news, the man visited a local cardiothoracic surgeon, who recommended surgery to insert a valve-saving aortic graft. Typically, **full recovery** from aortic root replacement surgery takes at least six to 12 weeks.

### THE SECOND OPINION

The man decided to seek a virtual second opinion through The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic, as Cleveland Clinic's heart center is recognized as the global leader in cardiovascular care. After a virtual intake call with The Clinic's nurse care manager, his medical records were collected and he was matched with a cardiologist and cardiothoracic surgeon at Cleveland Clinic. The physician team reviewed the man's imaging and measured the aortic root, finding it to be smaller than the local care team's measurement. They determined surgery was not necessary, instead recommending routine surveillance imaging.

### THE OUTCOME

Relieved to learn the recommendations of the Cleveland Clinic team, the patient was able to move forward with a "watchful waiting" approach in lieu of undergoing an unnecessary heart procedure.

From the sudden shock of potentially finding a major cardiac issue during a routine x-ray to the time spent thinking a major surgery would be needed, the patient found peace of mind at the end of his virtual second opinion journey. Beyond the avoided costs of \$213,000,<sup>1</sup> he was able to avoid the distress of undergoing surgery and the lengthy recovery time such a procedure typically entails.

<sup>1</sup> Miha S. Lucas, MD, Katherine Hardy, PA, and Joseph E. Lucas, PhD (2023). Primary Impact of Virtual Second Opinions.



### CARDIAC CASE

#### PRIMARY DIAGNOSIS

Aortic root aneurysm

#### PRIMARY TREATMENT PLAN

Surgical repair

#### TYPICAL RECOVERY TIME

At least 6–12 weeks

#### VIRTUAL SECOND OPINION

Aortic root size smaller than initially measured; surgery not required

#### RECOMMENDED TREATMENT

Routine surveillance imaging

**savings of  
\$213,000**

from virtual second opinion