

## Patient Story | Low Back Pain

### THE PRIMARY DIAGNOSIS

A woman with low back pain was seen by her local care team, who encouraged her to get an MRI. Upon receiving the results, she met with a local surgeon who recommended she have three lumbar discs fused. Spinal fusion surgery connects bones in the spine together to prevent movement and pain. It typically takes a few weeks to resume day-to-day activities [following surgery](#), and it can take up to a few months to return to work. The woman was hoping for a non-surgical option, so she decided to seek a virtual second opinion from The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic.

### THE SECOND OPINION

She scheduled a virtual intake visit with a nurse care manager from The Clinic to discuss her current diagnosis and treatment. After the initial video call, the clinical team quickly collected her records remotely on her behalf.

She was matched with a Cleveland Clinic neurosurgeon, who reviewed her charts and imaging. The surgeon recommended that she obtain additional x-rays taken while standing, which would help determine the best course of action. For example, a minimally invasive laminectomy removes bone from the spine and typically has a [shorter recovery time](#) than spinal fusion.

The woman continued conservative medical management while obtaining the additional x-rays. After she received them, she met virtually with the same Cleveland Clinic neurosurgeon, who determined there was no indication for surgery at the time.

### THE OUTCOME

The woman was thrilled to continue with conservative medical management to return to her normal state of health. It is important to feel heard and supported when dealing with a medical issue, and in this case the patient found that the appropriate treatment plan aligned with her own personal care goals. In addition to avoiding a long recovery time for spinal fusion, the \$164,000 in costs for an unnecessary surgery were avoided.<sup>1</sup>

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



### MSK CASE

#### PRIMARY DIAGNOSIS

Low back pain

#### PRIMARY TREATMENT PLAN

Spinal fusion procedure

#### TYPICAL RECOVERY TIME

A few months

#### VIRTUAL SECOND OPINION

No indication for surgery

#### RECOMMENDED TREATMENT

Continue conservative medical management

**savings of**  
**\$164,000**

from virtual second opinion