

## Patient Story | Bile Duct Cancer

### THE PRIMARY DIAGNOSIS

After finding atypical cells in a cytology test used to screen for certain diseases, a man's local care team provided him with difficult news: a diagnosis of possible bile duct cancer.

For treatment, they recommended he undergo a Whipple procedure, a major surgery that involves removing parts of the pancreas, small intestine, gall bladder, and bile duct. The [surgery often requires](#) a week-long hospital stay and another four- to six-week recovery time. Facing this diagnosis, the man decided to seek a second opinion, which he did virtually through The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic.

### THE SECOND OPINION

Following his video intake visit with a nurse care manager, The Clinic's clinical team collected his medical records and matched him with a Cleveland Clinic surgeon who was specialized in his type of case. The surgeon reviewed all relevant medical records and imaging and recommended a follow-up MRI, endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) test, and a repeat of the cytology to be reinterpreted by the Cleveland Clinic pathology team.

Additionally, the surgeon recommended that the case be presented to the Cleveland Clinic Tumor Board, a multidisciplinary group of subspecialists who review complex cases together to provide the best possible care.

### THE OUTCOME

After review, the Tumor Board favored a reactive process, as a new diagnosis of primary sclerosing cholangitis was made. This was a relief to the patient, who was elated to avoid a life-changing Whipple procedure.

Not only did he avert an unnecessary surgery, but also the difference in medical costs between his initial and secondary treatment plan recommendation amounted to roughly \$55,000.<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.



### CANCER CASE

#### PRIMARY DIAGNOSIS

Bile duct cancer

#### PRIMARY TREATMENT PLAN

Whipple procedure

#### TYPICAL RECOVERY TIME

1 week in hospital and another 4–6 weeks afterwards

#### VIRTUAL SECOND OPINION

Primary sclerosing cholangitis

#### RECOMMENDED TREATMENT

Medical management

**savings of  
\$55,000**

from virtual second opinion