

### Surgery Averted! Thanks to Cleveland Clinic Second Opinion

With nerves on edge, Susan Walaska waited at the hospital, mentally prepared to have surgery. Her physicians in Iowa, where she lives, had told her that surgery was absolutely necessary in order to repair her heart, which had a prolapsed mitral valve. So she traveled to Cleveland Clinic because, as she says, "I will not do anything heart-related without the Cleveland Clinic."

Then Waleska received some surprising news. Pre-operative tests indicated that surgery was not necessary. Her Cleveland Clinic surgeon explained the situation. "What he said was, 'Sue, we are not talking about replacing a car tire; we are talking about your heart,'" Walaska relays. "Then he told me, 'We are not going to go ahead and do surgery unless it is really a problem.'

"I began crying," she adds. "When you build up to heart surgery and then are told you do not need it, it's a big relief. My parents were with me because they live in the Cleveland area. Dad had triple bypass surgery and a mitral valve repair at the Clinic, and he feels the same way I do about it. We love the Cleveland Clinic."

Before they would consider performing heart surgery, Walaska's Cleveland Clinic heart specialists had ordered an echocardiogram and heart catheterization. These showed that the surgery was not yet needed, despite the urgency indicated by the Iowa physicians, who had insisted it was time for mitral valve repair.

This incident, which occurred in the spring of 2001, was the first time that surgery for Walaska had been averted by the Cleveland Clinic. "The second time that my local cardiologists told me I really should have my mitral valve fixed immediately, I decided to get a second opinion. While I was messing around online, I learned about **MyConsult**, an online service offered by Cleveland Clinic."

**MyConsult** online medical second opinion program is a sophisticated, Web-based extension of Cleveland Clinic's 80-plus-year role as one of America's most respected referral institutions. The secure, online program provides remote medical second opinions from Cleveland Clinic specialists for more than 1,000 life-threatening and life-altering diagnoses.

"I found **MyConsult** to be very user-friendly," says Walaska. "It did not take long to get back the report, and they told me that if I had any follow-up questions, they would answer them. I really liked the process. If I had another health-related problem, I would use **MyConsult** again."

In the **MyConsult** report, Cleveland Clinic cardiologists told Walaska that she did not need to have her heart's mitral valve repaired immediately. They said that the problem should be regularly monitored during routine checkups and that she should watch for certain signs and symptoms that would indicate the necessity of surgery.

"The doctors gave me all the parameters I need to know so that I can tell when surgery is needed," she says. "It is so comforting to have someone at the caliber of the Cleveland Clinic to tell me that if my body does this, then you need that. I don't have that level of confidence with my local doctors."

Walaska, who is 58 years old, was diagnosed with a heart murmur at the age of 7. "But they think I was probably born with it," she says. "So I have had the mitral valve problem for many years and have always had some shortness of breath. During the past couple years I have gone from having what they call a 'mild-to-moderate' problem to a 'moderately severe' problem. "Medications are no longer relieving my symptoms as well, and my ankle is swelling more often," she says. "According to the Clinic, these are indications that surgery will be needed soon. So I'll probably go there in January or February.

Walaska claims that some of her heart problems were due to her job as a behavior disorder teacher. "After 13 years of troubled teenagers screaming in your face, it was getting to me. Even though I loved the job, I decided to give up that level of stress. Now I work as a consultant to special education programs in two different school districts. When I gave up the old job, I had an immediate relief of symptoms."

Walaska and her husband reside in North Liberty, Iowa. She has three grown sons, from a previous marriage, who all live in Iowa. "I walk about two miles a day and work out on exercise equipment at home, which the doctors say is okay," she says. "In my free time, I love to read – especially historical fiction.

"I also love being with my lady friends," she adds. "I work more than 40 hours a week; so going out with a group of lady friends is great. There's nothing better than girlfriend time."

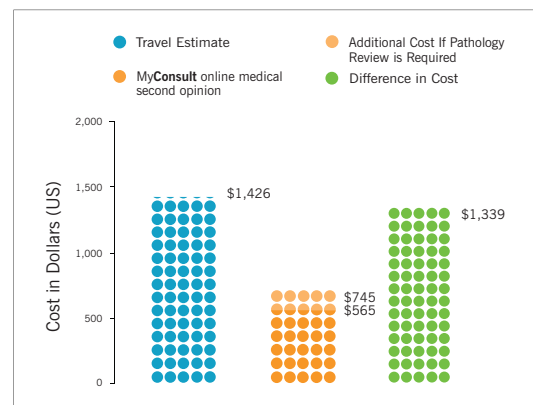
Thanks to the Cleveland Clinic, Walaska can look forward to a lot more "girlfriend time." Twice now, the Clinic has forestalled surgery for her, but when she finally needs to have it done, she plans to travel to Cleveland, where she says she will be in the best of hands. "This is all about how I trust cardiology at the Cleveland Clinic," she declares.

**The following average cost statistics of traveling to the Cleveland Clinic from North Liberty, Iowa is based on the demographic information of the previous MyConsult patient testimonial.**

North Liberty, IA to Cleveland Clinic (approx. 559 mi., 8 hrs 54 min)  
Average price for two people traveling to the Cleveland Clinic:

\$800.....	Roundtrip Flight for 4 days
\$426.....	Hotel Stay 4 day, 3 nights
\$200.....	Food/Drink 4 days
<b>\$1,426.....</b>	<b>Total Trip Estimate</b>
<b>\$565.....</b>	<b>MyConsult online medical second opinion</b>
<b>\$1,339.....</b>	<b>Difference in Cost</b>

(Prices are based on an average stay in the City of Cleveland and may vary depending on time of year, length of stay, and advance booking of flight.) October, 2008, v1



To learn more about Cleveland Clinic's **MyConsult** program, visit [www.ClevelandClinic.org/myconsult](http://www.ClevelandClinic.org/myconsult). Registering is easy, and if you choose to seek an online medical second opinion through Cleveland Clinic, the entire process should take 30-45 minutes. You may also contact the **MyConsult** office at 216.444.3223 or 800.223.2273 ext 43223.

## Second Opinion Makes Surgery 'No-Brainer' for Michiganite

Thanks to a second opinion from Cleveland Clinic, a man from Cadillac, Michigan, feels he got the best care. "When my doctors in nearby Traverse City recommended heart surgery, my health insurance company suggested I get a second opinion," says Robert Hansen, a 70-year-old retired telecommunication engineer.

"They directed me to MyConsult, an online service offered by Cleveland Clinic," he explains. "I decided to take advantage of it, due to the excellent reputation of the Clinic, which is renowned. I didn't want to risk going to just anyone for heart surgery."

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Hansen lived with a mild case of mitral valve regurgitation for many years. When a person has this heart condition it means that one of the valves in their heart (the mitral valve) is letting blood leak backwards.

"We'd been watching this problem for about 15 years," he says. "Apparently, the leaking was minimal, but in the last year, the regurgitation increased threefold. I was feeling very lethargic and short of breath and had a lack of energy and stamina. I thought it was just old age."

Before Hansen's heart problem worsened, he adhered to a regular exercise program, which involved working out at a gym five times a week. He also played golf occasionally with a group of friends and did extensive yard work, including cutting a half-acre of grass, trimming shrubs and gardening.

"When my heart condition escalated, I was exhausted by the time we got to the second or third hole on the golf course," Hansen says. "I couldn't work out at the gym like I did before, and I could hardly finish cutting the grass, let alone do the other yard work."

When Hansen went to his cardiologist for his annual echocardiogram stress test, the physician uncovered the problem and strongly recommended immediate surgery. "He said it was life-threatening," Hansen says.

After Hansen found out about MyConsult, he asked his cardiologist what he thought about taking advantage of the service. "He enthusiastically said he was in favor of that, and he put together a whole packet of my medical information for me. He said, 'I just want the best for you.'

"I received a report back from MyConsult in less than two weeks," Hansen adds. "I got it the same day that I was meeting with the surgeon in Traverse City, and I was able to take it with me. Everything fell into place, and it was wonderful. "It ended up that the Cleveland Clinic's recommendation paralleled that of my local doctors," Hansen says. "They all said there was an 80% or better chance that repairing my mitral valve would be successful. This was due to the fact that they said I'm way above the normal health for a 70-year-old male. "If the surgeons at Traverse City had said that they could only replace my valve with a mechanical one and if the Clinic had said they could repair my valve, then the choice would be a no-brainer," he explains.

"I would have gone to Cleveland to have the surgery done. But since the opinions were parallel and I didn't want to make the seven-hour drive, I opted to have the surgery done in Traverse City."

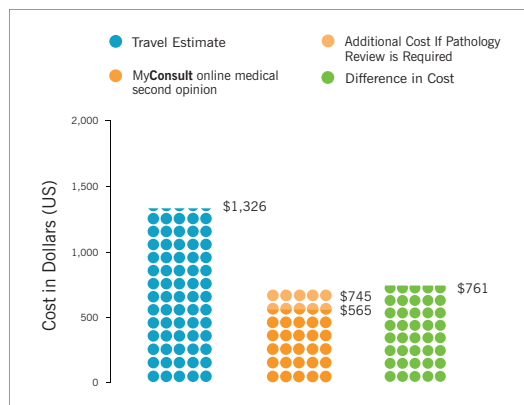
Hansen and his wife have grown children, six grandchildren and a great-granddaughter. "My son came for the operation, which was at the beginning of November," he says. "I'm feeling really good now, even though I'm still in the recovery stage. The doctors have reassured me that I won't believe how good I'll feel. We're all happy it turned out so well."

### The following average cost statistics of traveling to the Cleveland Clinic from Cadillac, Michigan is based on the demographic information of the previous MyConsult patient testimonial.

Cadillac, MI to Cleveland Clinic (approx. 363 mi., 5 hrs 47 min)  
Average price for two people traveling to the Cleveland Clinic:

\$700.....	Roundtrip Flight for 4 days
\$426.....	Hotel Stay 4 day, 3 nights
\$200.....	Food/Drink 4 days
<b>\$1,326.....</b>	<b>Total Trip Estimate</b>
<b>\$565.....</b>	<b>MyConsult online medical second opinion</b>
<b>\$761.....</b>	<b>Difference in Cost</b>

(Prices are based on an average stay in the City of Cleveland and may vary depending on time of year, length of stay, and advance booking of flight.) October, 2008, v1



Cost of a MyConsult online medical second opinion vs. Cost of Travel

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