

“I was able to make a **confident and correct decision.**”

In November of 2018, John* noticed back pain on his lower right side and wondered if it may be a kidney stone. His doctor ordered a CT scan, and the radiologist identified a cyst on his right kidney and recommended an ultrasound.

In January of 2019, the ultrasound confirmed a small mass on his kidney. His doctor recommended surgical removal as the presence of cancer could not be excluded, and his family history indicated it could be hereditary. His brother had been diagnosed with kidney cancer, and their father died from a kidney condition.

“As soon as I started seeing results from the CT scans and heard that it could be cancer, I wanted to find out what that really meant and what my options were,” says John. Being the “analytical type,” and as most people do, John turned to the internet. “Doing my own research, I saw horrible scary pictures and life expectancy charts and crazy things like that,” he says.

John also knew that employees are encouraged to contact ConsumerMedical whenever they consider surgery. “There were some communications this year specifically about cancer that caught my eye,” says John. “I didn’t hesitate to contact ConsumerMedical.”

Kidney cancer

There are two kidneys, one on each side of the backbone, above the waist. Tiny tubules in the kidneys filter and clean the blood. Kidney cells can become cancerous and grow out of control, forming a tumor. If a cancerous tumor is small and isolated, the surgeon can remove the tumor or diseased tissue and leave as much healthy kidney tissue as possible.

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When John called ConsumerMedical, he was immediately connected to his Nurse Ally, with whom he communicated at least a dozen times over the next five months via phone, email and correspondence. “She sent me a great deal of research on kidney cancer,” says John. “There was at least one book and several articles that were super beneficial. I’m kind of a research hound. It was great because pages were tabbed, and sections were highlighted that were specific to my situation. I was able to go directly to the information I needed.”

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The Nurse Ally also suggested a conference call with Dr. Byrd, a ConsumerMedical physician who specializes in kidney diseases. During the conference call, John reviewed the MRI findings and the discussion with his urologist. Dr. Byrd explained that there likely would be two paths: watch and wait, and go back for imaging in a few months, or have the cyst surgically removed. Given John's age (60 years old) and healthy status, along with his family history, Dr. Byrd counselled John that "getting it out as soon as possible" might increase the likelihood that a significant portion of the kidney function could be preserved. "That confirmed what I had been thinking," says John.

Following the call, Dr. Byrd asked the Nurse Ally to send a credentialing report on John's urologist and information on what to expect after surgery. "The information validated that my attending doctor was one of the best," says John. "The guidance and information ConsumerMedical provided made for a confident and correct decision."

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John underwent surgery in April. Luckily, the tumor was small. Once removed, cancer was confirmed. "They took out some margin (of tissue) around the tumor, as well, and got all of the cancer. And they were able to salvage about 80 percent of the kidney."

Reflecting on his experience with ConsumerMedical, "Any time I reached out to ConsumerMedical with questions, my Nurse Ally was quick to respond, many times the same day," says John. "She was very compassionate and understanding."

In his 36 years with the company, it was the first time John requested services. "I used to hesitate to use my employee benefits," he says. "Now I realize there is no reason to hesitate. There is no judgment. They are only there to help." Especially after doing his own research and seeing worst-case scenarios, John realized, "It wasn't relative to me. What I lacked doing my own research was to put the right perspective on my situation. I had a very different set of concerns and actions to take. If something like this happens again, I will immediately contact ConsumerMedical."

** Based on a true story. Names and identifying details have been changed to protect the participant's identity.*

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