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When Doctors Disagree: A Founder's Story on Conflicting Advice

I remember when my mom was sick with pancreatic cancer. Given the complexity of her case, we got a second opinion. It was different from the first. Then a third. Different still. Finally, a fourth. You guessed it, different. It was frustrating and exhausting. At times, we wanted to cry and throw our hands up in defeat.

Tips for Navigating Conflicting Medical Advice

Not every case is as complex as cancer, but the reality is that changing guidance and opposing recommendations are a staple of the U.S. medical system. Hearing different answers from doctors can leave you uncertain about who to trust and what to do next. Over time, I've come to believe there are **four things** that can help make conflicting medical opinions a little easier to navigate.

1. Give Every Doctor the Same Complete Information

When you're going through something difficult, it's natural to tell your story a little differently each time. You remember one detail in one appointment and another in the next. You're focused on getting everything out, but important context can get lost along the way.

My advice is to write it all down once and bring it with you everywhere. Keep a one-page summary of your medications, your symptoms and when they started, and what you've tried. Bring your medical records and test results with you, too. When every doctor is starting from the same information, you can better understand where their opinions align and where they differ.

2. Ask Each Physician to Walk You Through Their Reasoning

Two doctors can look at the same case and give you different answers, and most of the time, it isn't because one of them is wrong. They're simply weighing different things. One may be focused on treating the problem as aggressively as possible. Another may be more concerned with protecting your quality of life.

So don't be afraid to ask why. Ask what they're weighing and what would have to change for them to recommend something else. Understanding the reasoning behind each recommendation can help you make sense of the differences. Sometimes, the disagreement starts to make sense. Sometimes, it disappears altogether.

3. Understand When You're in Medical "Gray Territory"

Receiving conflicting guidance often means you're in gray territory.

We want medicine to be clear, certain. But in practice, a lot of it isn't. Evidence changes, guidelines evolve, and smart, caring experts can disagree. That's undeniably frustrating, but it also means there's probably not one right answer you're failing to find. There may be more than one way forward, and your

best answer depends on you, your body, and your life. You get a say in that.

4. Know When to Ask for a Patient Advocate

The last piece of advice is to not go through it alone. Looking back, what my family needed wasn't a fifth opinion. We needed help making sense of the four we already had.

A family member or friend can be a source of support, especially when you're facing something difficult. But when the questions get complicated and the answers don't line up, there's real value in having someone in your corner who understands the medical system. For a lot of people, that's a patient advocate, an experienced healthcare professional whose job is to help make sense of what's happening and help you reach a decision you feel good about.

That kind of support would have made an astounding difference for my family. It's a fundamental reason Solace exists.

I wish someone had told us these things back then. Of course, none of it would have made the physicians agree, but it would have made the road less lonely and the decisions easier to live with. If you're in a similar situation right now, I hope this helps.

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FAQs: Common Questions about Conflicting

Gather your complete records — test results, imaging, and treatment history — and give the exact same information to every doctor you see. Comparing opinions works best when every physician is starting from the same facts.

2. Do doctors mind if you get a second opinion?

Most doctors treat second opinions as a normal, expected part of care, especially for a serious or complex diagnosis.

Seeking one isn't a commentary on your doctor's competence.

3. When should you get a second opinion?

Consider a second opinion any time you're facing a serious diagnosis, a major procedure, or guidance that doesn't sit right with you. Conflicting or uncertain answers

from your care team are one of the clearest signals it's worth getting another set of eyes.

4. Why do doctors sometimes disagree on the same case?

Two doctors can look at identical test results and reach different conclusions because they're weighing different things; one might prioritize treating a problem aggressively, another might prioritize quality of life. Disagreement often means you're in genuine medical gray area, not that one doctor is wrong.

5. When should you ask for a patient advocate?

A patient advocate is especially helpful when you're weighing conflicting opinions, facing a serious diagnosis, or feeling overwhelmed by appointments and paperwork. Their job is to gather your records, compare recommendations, and help you reach a decision you feel confident about.

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Jeremy Gurewitz is the CEO and Co-Founder of Solace, a healthcare

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Solace puts an advocate in your corner—someone who’s spent years in healthcare, knows the system, and takes on the toughest parts of your care. Don’t do this alone.



Eligibility varies by plan. Advocates do not provide medical or legal advice or services. Must be 18 years or older.

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