

MEMBER STORY



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NAME: Lionel
AGE: 81

**REASON FOR CONTACTING
BEST DOCTORS:**

To confirm if heart surgery
was truly necessary

**BEST DOCTORS
EXPERT SPECIALTY:**
Cardiology

“ I cannot tell you how grateful I am to have received the advice so quickly and how great it was dealing with everyone involved with the process”

As the main caregiver for two grown children with cancer and a wife struggling with health issues, Lionel* faced a dilemma when he was advised to undergo surgery for an ascending aortic aneurysm.

At 81 years old, Lionel has been looking after a daughter with lung cancer that has metastasized into her arm and leg bones, as well as a son with a rare type of cancer that has progressed to an advanced stage, requiring palliative care. Lionel also helps care for his wife, who is no longer able to walk due to a car accident that left her legs shattered. Lionel does all the shopping, housework and meal preparation for his family and takes his wife and daughter to their appointments.

Given his family circumstances, Lionel had to make a difficult decision when a surgeon recommended he undergo an operation to resolve his heart condition. Up until that point, Lionel had been living with his aortic aneurysm for several years and was being monitored by his physician. Unsure what to do, Lionel turned to Best Doctors for help. He had access to the service through his insurance provider.

Lionel sought Best Doctors' opinion as to whether he truly needed surgery and what the consequences would be if he decided not to go ahead with the procedure. He also wanted information about the recovery process, so he could determine how he would manage his family situation should he go ahead with the operation.

Best Doctors gathered Lionel's medical records and a Best Doctors cardiologist reviewed his case. The team assigned to him ensured his report was ready before a follow-up appointment with his surgeon, and Lionel spoke with his Best Doctors Nurse and Best Doctors Expert, who explained the consequences of not having surgery and discussed recovery expectations in a way that was accessible.

They also answered all of Lionel's questions and he said it was the most informative conversation he had had about his condition, giving him confidence heading into the appointment with his surgeon.

Best Doctors confirmed what Lionel had been told about the consequences of not proceeding with surgery, that he faced a risk of death from a rupture or other complication, and that this risk increased the longer he delayed surgery. Best Doctors also explained that the risk of complications associated with surgery increased the longer he waited.

After the consultation with Best Doctors, Lionel decided to go ahead with open-heart surgery and part of his aorta was replaced through grafting.

“ I had put this operation off for several years as it (the heart condition) was getting worse.”

The surgery was a success and Lionel was extremely impressed with the job performed by his surgeon as well as the care he received from the cardiac team at Westmead Private Hospital in Sydney. Lionel's neighbours and friends have been caring for his family during his recovery period.

Lionel praised Best Doctors for their efficiency and for clearly explaining the different scenarios he faced as he contemplated his options, giving him peace of mind about his decision.

“ I'm very satisfied that I got more than I expected with a second opinion - I didn't think they (Best Doctors) would go as far as they did. I was confident that the course this was going to take would be correct.”