

How Best Doctors Helped Ashifa

Best Doctors found the right diagnosis for Ashifa, saving her from the wrong treatment.

Ashifa had a small lump on her neck and was referred to a specialist for a biopsy. The results came back negative, but her general practitioner still recommended she get the lump removed as its structure was changing and her voice was being affected.

Ashifa was referred to a surgeon and underwent a successful operation. But about 10 days later, she received a call from the surgeon who told her the preliminary results from pathology revealed she had metastatic squamous head and neck cancer, a very aggressive type of cancer, though doctors couldn't determine the source of the cancer and she was immediately referred to a cancer center.

At this point, Ashifa decided to contact Best Doctors, a service she had access to through her insurance policy. Her husband became her full time health advocate as she continued to keep herself busy with work meetings as much as possible, and she authorized him to deal with Best Doctors. He was in touch with Ashifa's member advocate a few times every week from that point on.

Meanwhile, Ashifa's oncology team provided her with an aggressive treatment plan that called for 30 rounds of chemotherapy and concurrent radiation. She was left reeling, struggling to reconcile her cancer diagnosis with an absence of any symptoms, such as fatigue and pain.

"It made no sense to me, but they said in 25 per cent of cases, they can't find the source of the cancer and they have to go in and zap everything," she said. Unsettled, Ashifa and her husband contacted a few doctors they knew personally, sending them her test results. One specialist questioned whether Ashifa had cancer at all, prompting her to request a PET scan and MRI.

She also underwent a tonsillectomy, because the type of cancer she was diagnosed with has a tendency to "hide" in the tonsils, which must be removed in order to be biopsied. Ashifa described this procedure as "the worst pain" she had ever experienced.

Frustration set in. "At this point I had two surgeries and a total of 16 biopsies were done and they still couldn't find the source of the cancer," Ashifa said. However, her doctors decided to stick with



Best Doctors was incredible—they were very supportive, responsive and timely."

the original treatment plan and scheduled Ashifa for her first round of chemotherapy.

In the meantime, Best Doctors had Ashifa's biopsy samples retested by an independent pathologist at a different hospital. The pathologist determined that Ashifa had an autoimmune related condition, not squamous cell carcinoma.

A clean biopsy sample was then taken and sent to Best Doctors specialists in Boston for testing. At this point, Best Doctors' medical director had become involved in Ashifa's case and was also reviewing her biopsy samples.

Just before Ashifa was scheduled to go in for her first chemo treatment, her husband received a call from the Best Doctors member advocate. Best Doctors tested the new biopsy sample and the conclusion was definitive: Ashifa did not have cancer and the treatment plan needed to be canceled immediately. Ashifa said, "I received a call from my oncologist apologizing to me."

Best Doctors specialists are now working on Ashifa's case with the oncology team to determine what caused the lump on her neck. She will be undergoing further tests and everything will be reviewed by both the Best Doctors team in the U.S. and her treating oncology team.

Not only did Ashifa credit Best Doctors with helping save her life, she also lauded the entire process, adding that she frequently recommends the service to others. "Throughout the process, they would give us amazing updates," she said. "Best Doctors and my husband saved my life," she said.



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