

# Why Virtual Second Opinions Matter: Providers Weigh In

Controlling costs while improving care outcomes is a strategic priority — and a delicate balancing act — for providers and health plans. Virtual Second Opinions (VSOs) not only provide peace of mind about the patient's diagnosis and treatment, but also lead to improved patient satisfaction, strengthened health outcomes, and lowered costs.

To better understand how physicians view and use VSO offerings, The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic commissioned a survey of cardiologists, oncologists, neurologists, and primary care physicians across the country.

Here are some highlights of the findings.

## VSO Adoption Trends

### Who's using virtual second opinion services?



#### Oncologists

**52%**

Most likely adopters, with over half of them (52%) using VSOs.

**44%**

Regularly refer patients to VSOs—more than other specialties.

#### Cardiologists

**12%**

Least likely (12%) to have used a VSO.



**95%**

### Nearly all physicians support or recommend second opinions.

Even if they don't actively promote VSOs, physicians support their patients' decisions to seek second opinions.

### When do physicians recommend second opinions?

In the later stages of a condition, after trying other treatment plans:

- **13%** of all physicians
- **16%** of primary care providers
- **20%** of oncologists

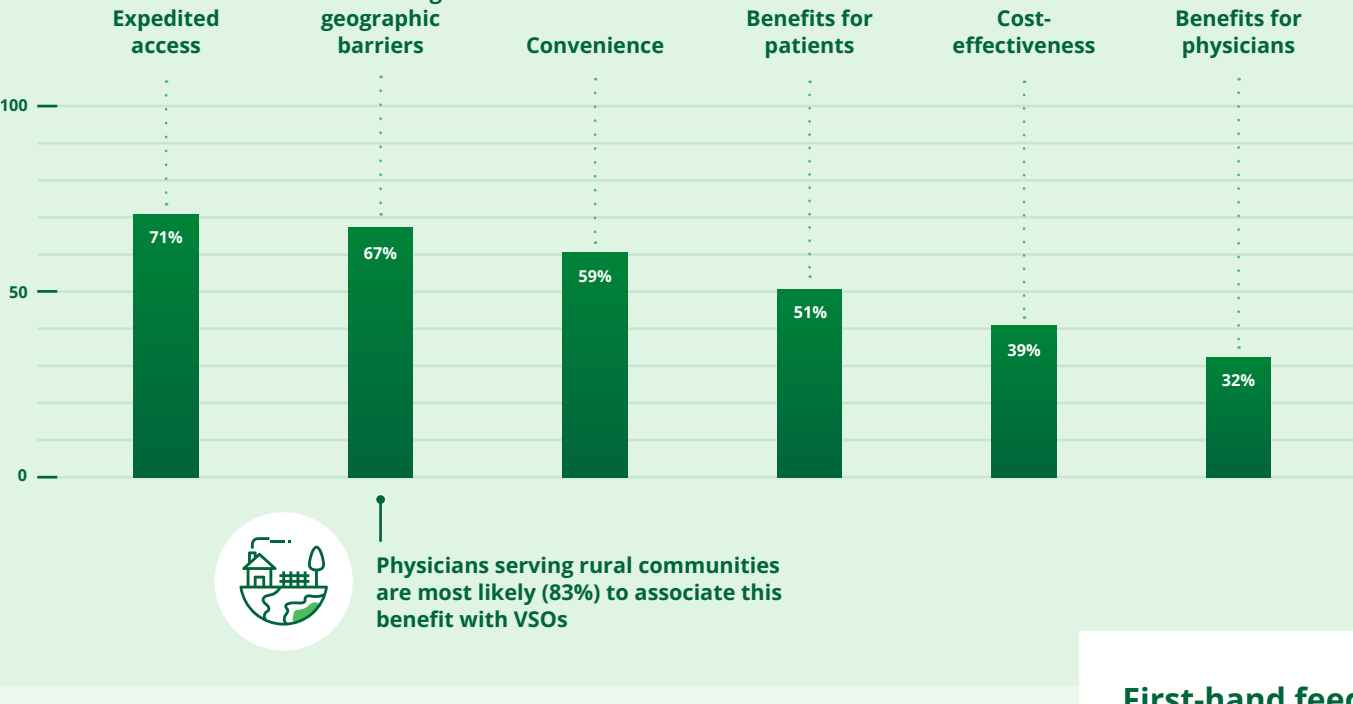
### In rural communities, where access to specialists may be limited:

- **21%** of physicians serving rural communities almost always recommend a second opinion
- **10%** of physicians almost always recommend second opinions in any situation.
- Only **4%** of physicians do not initiate conversations about second opinions.

## VSO Advantages

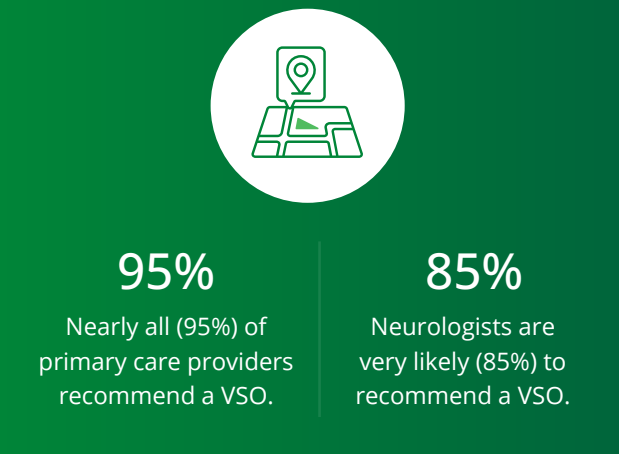
### The benefits of using VSOs

Overall, physicians typically associate VSOs with:



### Trends in provider VSO recommendations

Physicians across specialties and geographies cite several reasons for referring their patients for a VSO.



### First-hand feedback

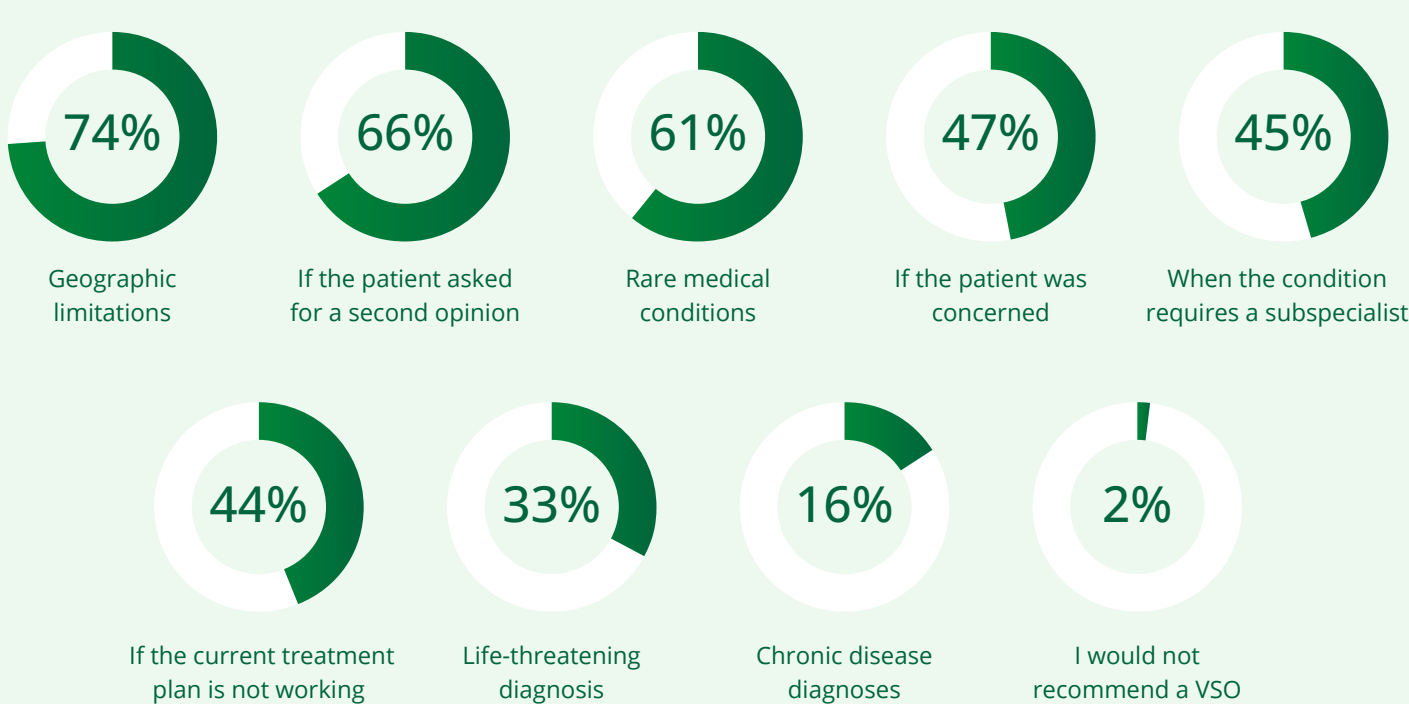
**75%**

Three out of four of the providers who have used a VSO say they're satisfied with their experience, offering comments like:

“Helps to triage whether a patient needs an in-person visit with a specialist; expedites long wait times.”

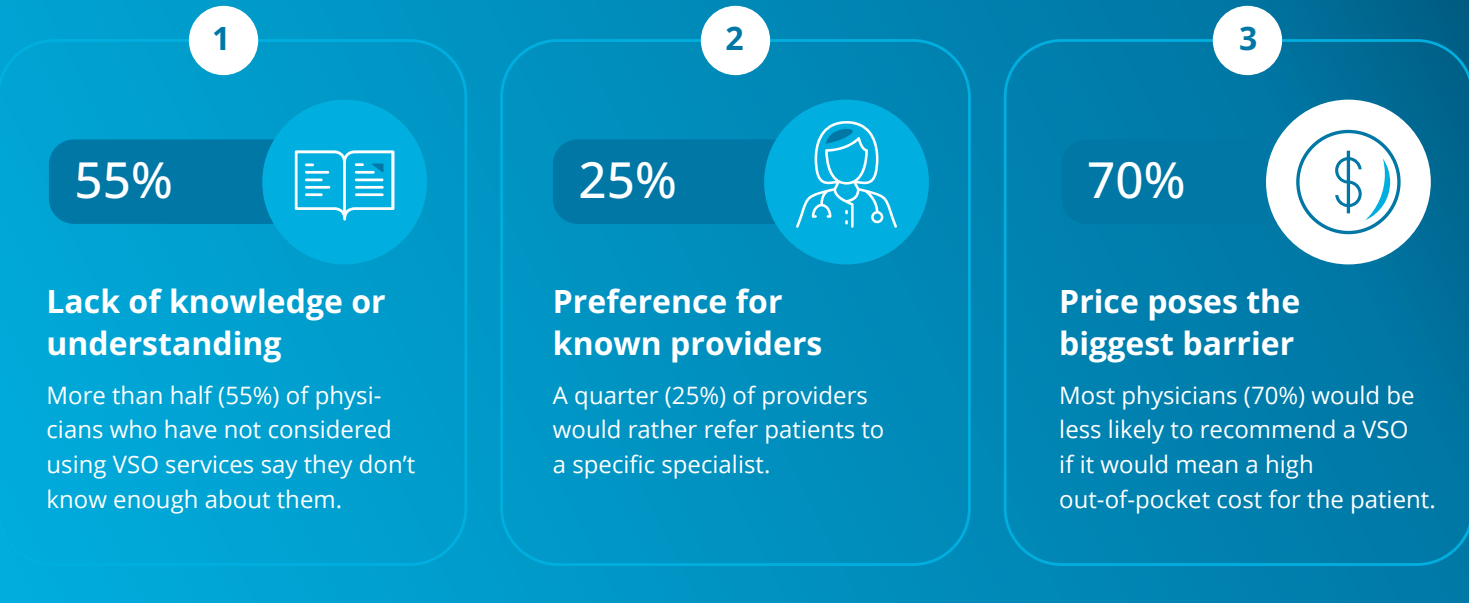
“Easy access to a wide variety of subspecialists with a quick turnaround time. The visits themselves are quick as well.”

### Reasons to recommend a VSO



### So, why aren't MORE physicians recommending VSOs?

## Barriers to VSO Adoption



### Are physicians and health plans considering the potential cost savings of VSOs?

According to a separate, third-party impact study:<sup>1</sup>



### Virtual second opinions DECREASE HEALTHCARE COSTS

**\$8,705**  
average per case

Nearly **5X** more than the cost of the VSO

### IN HIGH-COST CASES where the cost of the primary care plan exceeds \$10,000

VSOs save **\$100,000** per patient on average



### Where do these savings come from?

- A change in diagnosis or treatment plan (**67% of cases**)
- Recommendation of a non-surgical alternative (**85% of cases where surgery was initially recommended**)
- Fewer hospitalizations (**62% reduction compared to initial treatment plan**)



## Explore the Value of a VSO

It's time to close the value gap and promote access to VSO services for **better care for life-changing conditions at lower cost.**

Facilitating the path to VSOs leads to **OPTIMAL** outcomes.

It also **REDUCES** healthcare expenses.

It supports more collaborative care and **IMPROVES** patient satisfaction.

Learn more about the value of VSOs.  
**Contact The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic today.**

<sup>1</sup> Miha S. Lucas, MD, Katherine Hardy, PA, and Joseph E. Lucas, PhD (2023). *The Primary Impact of Virtual Second Opinions.*