

# An expatriate with conflicting medical advice

## Summary

Our client's employee was scheduled to undergo a total hip replacement at the advice of doctors abroad. The recommendation for surgery came as a result of a short period of mild discomfort.

1. The Healix medical team urged her to postpone. Our assistance wasn't exactly welcomed at first- it was perceived to be motivated by cost containment.
2. The patient later proved extremely grateful for our intervention after she sought a second opinion in her home country, in which the doctor agreed with our assessment.
3. The patient subsequently abandoned her plans for surgery and avoided potential harmful long-term effects.

## Challenge

The patient had a brief history of relatively mild discomfort in the hip. She saw an orthopedic surgeon while on a business trip to Hong Kong. After a standard X-ray, an MRI scan and an outpatient review, the orthopedic surgeon advised the patient to have a complete hip arthroplasty. The surgery was scheduled to take place within a week of the diagnosis.

The Healix medical team was immediately concerned that the proposed surgery seemed disproportionate to the length and severity of symptoms. It is unusual for young patients to be offered this type of surgery unless all other options have been exhausted. In this case, more conservative options appeared not to have been considered at all.

## Our Approach

Our team contacted the patient and outlined our concerns. Initially, the approach we proposed was not well received by the patient. In short, the patient believed that we were motivated only by a desire to save money.

Nevertheless, the patient agreed to give us an account of her symptoms and sent us copies of her X-ray and MRI results. These were reviewed by the Healix medical team in consultation with a Healix Consultant Panel orthopedic surgeon.

The team strongly advised the patient to delay the planned surgery and seek a second opinion. She reluctantly agreed, and her case was reviewed by an orthopedic surgeon in Sydney during a period when the patient was in her home country.

## Outcome

The Australian orthopedic surgeon told the patient that to have a total hip arthroplasty at her age to provide relief for mild symptoms would likely be enormously harmful. The patient heeded this advice and abandoned her plan to have surgery. She subsequently contacted us and expressed gratitude for our intervention and expert advice.

**Our second medical opinion service enabled the patient to avoid serious surgery with potential long-term effects.**