Appendix 1. Case scenario with randomized cost information.

Imagine your thumb, index, and middle fingers get numb at night. This wakes you up at night and you lose sleep. The doctor tells you that you have mild carpal tunnel syndrome.

You have 2 treatment options:

Option 1: Surgery. Surgery cures carpal tunnel syndrome. A 1-to-2 inch cut in your palm is made and the ligament pressing on the nerve is cut. After surgery, you'll sleep better and keep your nerve function. There is a very small risk of injuring the nerve permanently. The wound might open a little or get a small infection and the scar is tender for 6 to 12 months.

Option 2: Splint. Wearing a splint at night can help you sleep. It keeps your wrist straight and your fingers won't go numb. The splint does not cure carpal tunnel syndrome. A splint may be able to delay surgery for many years.

(Randomized cost information)

Assume the cost of surgery is about $2,000. There are over 400,000 carpal tunnel release surgeries performed in the United States each year. That's around $1 billion in costs to society. Assume your insurance will pay for all the cost.

Now that you have learned about the benefits, risks, and alternatives of surgery, we want to know what decision you would make if you were in this situation. Keep in mind that there is no right or wrong answer. This is a decision that should be based on your personal values, goals, and preferences.

Should you have the surgery right now?

1. Definitely not

2. Probably not

3. Maybe not

4. Maybe

5. Probably

6. Definitely

Briefly, why did you make the choice you did?

Appendix 2. Choice for surgery rationale.[1]

Rationale	Choice for surgery					
	Definitely not N=26	Probably not N=33	Maybe not N=12	Maybe N=21	Probably N=45	Definitely N=37

Avoid surgery: e.g. *"I try to avoid surgery"*	6 (23)	2 (6.1)	2 (17)	1 (4.8)	-	-
Last resort: e.g. *"I would want to try other options first if the surgery is not emergent"*	17 (65)	20 (61)	7 (58)	4 (19)	-	-
Testimonial: e.g. *"I hear a lot of positive/negative feedback about this"*	1 (3.9)	-	-	1 (4.8)	2 (4.4)	-
Values: e.g. *"I wonder how long I would be in recovery. I live alone and have a lot of physical chores to do each day"*	1 (3.9)	9 (27)	1 (8.3)	7 (33)	4 (4.9)	-
Values + cost: e.g. *"It depends on how much pain/annoyance wearing the splint is and the cost of surgery"*	-	-	1 (8.3)	1 (4.8)	-	-
Cost: e.g. *"Costs"*	1 (3.9)	-	-	-	-	-
Symptom intensity: e.g. *"I want full function of my hands without the numbness and tingling"*	-	2 (6.1)	1 (8.3)	6 (29)	11 (24)	23 (62)
Symptom intensity + cost: e.g. *"Severity of the issue and insurance coverage"*	-	-	-	-	1 (2.2)	-
Put it behind me: e.g. *"I would rather try to resolve the issue, even with a risk, than wait"*	-	-	-	1 (4.8)	25 (56)	11 (30)
Put it behind me + cost: e.g. *"If the insurance would cover the cost, then I see the benefits as outweighing the risks"*	-	-	-	-	2 (4.4)	3 (8.1)

Discrete variables as number (percentage); [1] 8 (4.4%) did not report rationale for their treatment choice.

Appendix 3. Bivariate analyses of factors associated with choice for surgery.

Variables	Entire cohort N=182[1]			CTS cohort N=52			Non-CTS cohort N=128		
	Choice for no surgery	Choice for surgery	P value	Choice for no surgery	Choice for surgery	P value	Choice for no surgery	Choice for surgery	P value
Age in years	53 ± 16	51 ± 15	0.362	55 ± 14	53 ± 15	0.685	53 ± 17	50 ± 16	0.335
Sex									
Women	38 (51)	61 (56)	0.546	10 (71)	26 (68)	1.00	28 (47)	35 (50)	0.728
Men	36 (49)	47 (44)		4 (29)	12 (32)		32 (53)	35 (50)	
Race (self-described)									
White	55 (74)	76 (70)	0.616	11 (79)	29 (76)	1.00	44 (73)	47 (67)	0.565
Non-white	19 (26)	32 (30)		3 (21)	9 (24)		16 (27)	23 (33)	
Marital status									
Married/Domestic partnership	45 (61)	70 (65)		8 (57)	22 (59)		37 (62)	48 (69)	
Single	15 (20)	18 (17)	0.575	3 (21)	6 (16)	0.971	12 (20)	12 (17)	0.403
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	14 (19)	19 (18)		3 (21)	9 (24)		11 (18)	10 (14)	

Level of education									
High school or less	15 (20)	31 (29)		4 (29)	16 (42)		11 (18)	15 (21)	
2-years of college	13 (18)	21 (19)	0.103	4 (29)	5 (13)	0.779	9 (15)	16 (23)	0.211
4-years of college	18 (24)	26 (24)		4 (29)	10 (26)		14 (23)	16 (23)	
Post-college graduate	28 (38)	30 (28)		2 (14)	7 (18)		26 (43)	23 (33)	
Work status									
Employed	50 (68)	76 (70)		8 (57)	27 (71)		42 (70)	49 (70)	
Retired	17 (23)	21 (19)	0.325	3 (21)	9 (24)	0.235	14 (23)	12 (17)	0.821
Unemployed/Disabled	7 (9.5)	11 (10)		3 (21)	2 (5.3)		4 (6.7)	9 (13)	
Insurance status									
Private/Commercial	43 (58)	68 (63)		10 (71)	24 (63)		33 (55)	44 (63)	
Medicare	22 (30)	25 (23)	0.641	3 (21)	9 (24)	0.556	19 (32)	16 (23)	0.470
Other	6 (8.1)	10 (9.3)		-	2 (5.3)		6 (10)	8 (11)	
None	3 (4.1)	5 (4.6)		1 (7.1)	3 (7.9)		2 (3.3)	2 (2.9)	
Yearly income[1]									
Less than $50,000	13 (19)	24 (23)	0.705	5 (38)	8 (23)	0.473	8 (14)	16 (23)	0.480

$50,000-$99,999	20 (29)	28 (27)		3 (23)	16 (46)		17 (30)	12 (17)	
$100,000-$149,999	21 (30)	17 (16)		5 (38)	4 (11)		16 (29)	13 (19)	
$150,000-$199,999	6 (8.7)	12 (12)		-	3 (8.6)		6 (11)	9 (13)	
More than $200,000	9 (13)	23 (22)		-	4 (11)		9 (16)	19 (28)	
Presenting with CTS									
No	60 (81)	70 (65)	**0.020**	-	-	-	60 (100)	70 (100)	-
Yes	14 (19)	38 (35)		14 (100)	38 (100)		-	-	
Previous contralateral diagnosis of CTS									
No	67 (91)	87 (81)	0.093	7 (50)	19 (50)	1.00	60 (100)	68 (97)	0.499
Yes	7 (9.5)	21 (19)		7 (50)	19 (50)		0 (0)	2 (2.9)	
Viewing cost information									
Control cohort	39 (42)	53 (58)	0.653	6 (43)	18 (47)	1.00	33 (55)	35 (50)	0.601
Cost cohort	35 (39)	55 (61)		8 (57)	20 (53)		27 (45)	35 (50)	

Bold indicates statistically significant difference; [1] N=173 (95%).