How Patients Use Online Reviews
IndustryView Report
Trends from the healthcare industry
Abstract

In October and November 2013, we surveyed a total of 4,515 patients in the U.S. to reveal trends in the use of online physician review websites. We analyzed the data to answer the following questions:

- Who is using review sites to research doctors?
- During what point in their research are patients using these sites?
- What sites are patients using most often?
- What information are patients looking for?
Though this figure lags behind the percentage of consumers using review sites for retail decisions, we found a significant percent of patients using online reviews.
Although the 65+ age group has unexpectedly high utilization, overall we see use of online reviews trending downward with age.
As we expected, the likelihood of patients to use online reviews to research doctors increased steadily with their income.
We found that patients in urban areas predictably use online reviews with greater frequency than those in suburban or rural areas.
Perhaps most surprisingly, we found that males were one quarter more likely to use online review sites than females.
While a plurality of patients say they use Healthgrades most often, more patients indicated Yelp was the most trustworthy source of online physician reviews.
When Patients Use Online Reviews in Their Research

The overwhelming majority of patients using online reviews do so as a first step when looking for a new doctor.
We asked patients to rank the top 3 types of information they look for on review sites. Quality of care, overall ratings, and wait times were most important.
When asked about the most important information related to quality of care, nearly half of the patients indicated accuracy of diagnosis is most important.
Most Important Demographic Information

Years of experience and certifications were the most important demographic information sought by patients on review sites.
When it comes to information about how the practice runs, patients are looking for information on wait times, billing and payment issues, and staff friendliness.
Over a quarter of insured patients indicated they’d be willing to visit a doctor outside of their insurance network if he or she were very highly reviewed.
Females are significantly more willing to visit a highly-reviewed doctor outside of their insurance network than males.
The willingness of insured patients to visit a highly-reviewed out-of-network doctor is positively correlated with age.
Of all patients surveyed (including those who don’t use review sites), only 10 percent indicated they leave reviews for their doctors online.
Among patients who use review sites to research doctors, only 41 percent indicated they also leave reviews for their doctors.
Though rural patients are least likely to use online reviews, they’re most likely to leave them for their doctors.
Another surprise: excepting the 65+ age group, older patients are both less likely to use online reviews and more likely to leave them.
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