
Study Investigates Online Physician Rating Sites' Influence



A new study investigating the US population's awareness of online physician ratings sites has found that 65% of respondents are aware of these ratings, with roughly one-fourth reporting usage of these sites. The full findings are published in the February 19 issue of JAMA.

Background information in the article states that while patients were increasingly turning to online physician ratings in a similar manner as they have sought ratings for other products and services, there was little information about the public's awareness and use of online physician ratings, and whether these sites were having an influence when it came to making a decision about selecting a physician.

David A. Hanauer, MD, MS, of the University of Michigan Medical School in Ann Arbor, Michigan, conducted the study together with his team of colleagues. They surveyed over 2000 members of the public in September 2012 about their knowledge and use of online ratings for selecting physicians.

21% of respondents were in the age group 18 to 29 years; 17% in the 30 to 39 years; 18% were between 40 and 49 years old; 19% 50 to 59 years; and 26% were 60 years or older.

Among the findings of the survey:

- Forty percent reported that physician rating sites were "very important" when choosing a physician, although rating sites were endorsed less frequently than other factors, including word of mouth from family and friends;
- Awareness of online physician ratings at 65% was lower than for consumer goods such as cars reported at 87%, and non-health care service providers at 71%;
- Among those who sought online physician ratings in the past year, 35% reported selecting a physician based on good ratings and 37% had avoided a physician with bad ratings;
- For those who had not sought online physician ratings, 43% reported a lack of trust in the information on the sites.

In their conclusion the authors write that "rating sites that treat reviews of physicians like reviews of movies or mechanics may be useful to the public but the implications should be considered because the stakes are higher."

Source: [JAMA](#)

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