

Reviews of Orthopedic Surgeons on Physician Rating Websites: Analysis of 11,535 Reviews

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Introduction: Physician rating websites have become an increasingly popular method for patients to give feedback and obtain information about physicians and their past performances. Each physician rating website uses different criteria to evaluate physicians, with the option for patients to provide written reviews. Our goal was to identify factors that patients value when seeing an orthopedic surgeon.

Methods: The study design was observation. We analyzed 9 major physician rating websites (RateMDs.com, HealthGrades.com, Vitals.com, WebMD.com, Yelp.com, CareDash.com, Wellness.com, ZocDoc.com, YellowPages.com) to evaluate the online ratings of orthopedic surgeons and examine the variables that influence these ratings. Numeric ratings were standardized on a scale from 0 to 100 with higher values indicating more positive ratings. For websites with sub-components to each review, relationships between high ratings and individual components were analyzed.

Results: Online reviews of orthopedic surgeons in state analysis were evaluated in April 2019, accumulating a total of 11,535 reviews. The average overall rating of orthopedic surgeons was positive at 83.6 on our scale. The majority of physicians amassed 20 reviews or fewer on each website. Higher ratings of orthopedic surgeons were correlated with staff friendliness ($p=0.010$), punctuality ($p=0.009$), and knowledge/expertise ($p=0.031$). Analysis of written reviews showed that resolutions of original patient complaint were associated with a high-scoring review.

Conclusions: The online trend of orthopedic surgeons is positive overall with particular weight placed on timeliness and staff friendliness. Since submission of a physician review is purely voluntary, this data is affected by participation bias. The average number of reviews per physician is remarkably small, so the validity of these ratings as they correlate to actual physician performance should be questioned. In all, this study has tremendous impact for orthopedic surgeons because understanding the reasoning behind positive and negative reviews may help improve patient satisfaction.