

Parents wary of online doctor ratings

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Majority of parents are concerned about fake doctor ratings. Credit: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

For many, checking online reviews has become nearly routine for decisions on everything from cars to restaurants. But when it comes to choosing a doctor, the majority of parents aren't convinced online ratings

are reliable - or even real, a new national poll shows.

More than two-thirds of [parents](#) believe some online doctor reviews are fake, while slightly fewer say there are not enough ratings to make a good decision, according to this month's report from the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health. More than half of parents also feel doctors may influence who leaves ratings.

"Online rating sites are becoming an increasingly common and potentially influential source of information for parents as they choose a doctor," says lead author David Hanauer, M.D., a pediatrician at U-M's C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. "Websites reviewing doctors are readily available, but concerns about how trustworthy they are may be preventing parents from using them broadly."

Nearly one third of parents report looking at online doctor ratings for themselves or a family member over the past year. Moms are more likely than dads to visit these websites - 36 percent compared to 22 percent, respectively. Among parents who have considered [online ratings](#), two-thirds say they either chose or avoided doctors based on what they read.

Among parents who selected a doctor because of ratings, 87 percent say the online ratings accurately reflected their subsequent experiences.

Older parents also generally had more concerns about online doctor ratings than younger parents. Of parents age 30 and older, 71 percent were concerned about the possibility of fake reviews compared to 59 percent under the age of 30.

"People are regularly using online reviews to help make decisions about cars, movies and restaurants. It's no surprise that more websites are allowing patients to publicly share their experiences about their doctors as well," says Hanauer, who is also a clinical associate professor at the U-

M Medical School with a joint appointment in the School of Information and member of the U-M Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation.

"Doctor rating sites have the potential to help make the patient-physician relationship more service-oriented. In order for online rating sites to become a more accepted and useful tool, [doctors](#) will need to be more engaged in the process, in ways that assure that ratings are authentic."

Provided by University of Michigan Health System

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