

Online physician reviews don't reflect responses in patient satisfaction surveys

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Credit: Mayo Clinic

Physicians who receive negative reviews online do not receive similar responses in rigorous patient satisfaction surveys, according to new Mayo Clinic research in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*. Yet, compared with

colleagues without negative reviews, they score lower on factors that go beyond patient interactions and are beyond their immediate control.

"Our study highlights the disconnection between industry-vetted patient satisfaction scores and online [review](#) comments," says Sandhya Pruthi, M.D., an internal medicine [physician](#) at Mayo Clinic, who is the senior author. "Patients need to be aware of these distinctions as they make decisions about their health. Physicians also need to be aware, as they manage their online reputations."

Online physician reviews have become a popular resource for patients seeking information about medical options, with 1 in 6 physicians being rated. This is the first study to compare data of physicians who had negative online reviews and physicians who did not have negative reviews.

In a pilot between September and December 2014, researchers used Google searches and alerts to track negative online reviews of physicians at Mayo Clinic's Rochester campus. Of 2,148 physicians, 113 had negative online reviews. The physicians represented 28 departments and divisions.

Researchers then compared these physicians' scores in a formal [patient satisfaction](#) survey with the scores of other Mayo Clinic physicians in similar fields who had no negative online reviews. Researchers found no statistical differences in the overall scores, or in the scores for patient communication and interaction.

However, the group with negative reviews scored much lower on factors beyond patient-physician interactions. Those variables include interaction with desk staff, nursing, physical environment, appointment access, waiting time, problem resolution, billing and parking. The data did not indicate the specific instances or patient experiences that led to

[negative reviews.](#)

Researchers acknowledge the study's limitations. The physician groups were small. The time period to collect data, which used a single search engine, was limited. The online reviews reflected single experiences of patients.

In an editorial published in the same issue of *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, Bradley Leibovich, M.D., a Mayo Clinic urologist, says this research offers timely messages for patients with complaints, [patients](#) searching for information, providers and, ultimately, health care organizations.

"These findings ... underscore the totality and integrity of processes, elements and encounters - and not just the patient-provider interaction - that all need to be effectively and cohesively in place to ensure optimal patient experience and welfare," Dr. Leibovich writes.

In addition to Dr. Pruthi, Robert (R Jay) Widmer, M.D., Ph.D, an interventional cardiology resident at Mayo Clinic, is the first author. The researchers report no financial support or conflicts of interest.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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