



Importance of Board-Certified Dermatologist Online Reviews: Small Steps to Improve Patient Experiences and Perspectives

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Online physician reviews and ratings are becoming increasingly popular, potentially influencing prospective patients and their decisions regarding where to seek dermatologic care [1]. Cosmetic dermatologists, in particular, may rely heavily on online profiles to attract patients [2]. Previous work found significantly higher proportions of negative online reviews of dermatology (20.4%-32.7%) versus non-dermatology (4.7%-8.5%) practices performing botulinum toxin injections ($P < 0.0001$) [3]. In this commentary, we review digital review trends and make recommendations to improve online reviews of board-certified dermatologists.

Waqas et al [4] analyzed online ratings of 167 dermatologists and found that the lowest average ratings in the most and least dermatologist-dense areas were on Yelp (3.61) and Google (3.45), respectively. Ratings on healthcare versus general consumer websites were closer to the overall average (4.06) and had a higher degree of correlation across sites.

Therefore, healthcare versus general consumer websites may more accurately reflect authentic patient experiences.

Waqas et al [5] also analyzed dermatologist reviews across five websites and found no differences in achieving higher ratings for males versus females [odds ratio (OR):1.56; $P = 0.226$]. There was a greater likelihood of higher ratings in dermatologist-dense areas (OR: 2.61; $P = 0.48$) and lower ratings with increased years of experience (OR: 0.96; $P = 0.006$). Therefore, patients reported greater satisfaction with younger dermatologists in urban areas, which may be due to their spending more time with patients and using newer technologies. We postulate that younger patients, who are more comfortable using the internet, may be more likely to utilize online reviews. Older patients may need encouragement and guidance to write online reviews.

Trager et al [6] analyzed 12,272 online ratings of 187 Mohs micrographic surgeons and found that of 5,255

written comments, the majority (87%) were positive and most discussed perceived experiences [50.2%; 95% confidence interval (CI): 49%-52%] and bedside manner (33.2%; 95% CI: 32%-34%). Therefore, the content of written reviews may give insight into the things that matter most to patients.

Riemer et al [7] analyzed online ratings of 100 dermatologists, reporting that the mean ratings across all five websites were high (3.60-4.58). Zocdoc.com had significantly fewer negative comments than other websites ($\chi^2 = 12.02$; $P = 0.007$) and had the highest overall total (1231) and mean ratings per dermatologist (102.6), with notifications built in to solicit patient reviews. Therefore, encouraging patients to share their experiences may help negate the impact of outlier reviews when the overall volume is low.

First impressions from online reviews may impact where patients choose dermatological care and current reviews may not be entirely indicative of true patient experiences. We suggest analyzing ratings and content on healthcare-specific versus consumer websites to better gauge patient experiences and overall satisfaction. Since patients emphasize bedside manner in their reviews, delivering exceptional patient care as well as clear communication and relatability will likely improve patient satisfaction and translate to improved online ratings. Since the overwhelming majority of patients probably have positive visits with dermatologists, it is helpful to encourage patients to write reviews and share their experiences. Future studies should analyze reviews in the context of patient demographics, as differing priorities and

expectations may contribute to perceived experiences and dermatologist ratings.

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