Online Ratings of Neurosurgeons

Patient satisfaction ratings are increasingly used for hospital rankings, referral base and physician reimbursement. As such, online physician rating websites (PRWs) are quickly becoming a topic of interest.

To analyze the distribution of neurosurgeons' ratings on the 3 most widely used PRWs, and examine factors associated with positive and negative ratings. METHODS:

We used a key term search to identify board-certified neurosurgeons on 3 widely used PRWs: RateMD.com, Healthgrades.com, and Vitals.com. Data were collected on average rating and number of ratings. Demographic, training-related and practice-related data, as well as location of practice, and place of training were also collected. RESULTS:

Data was non-normally distributed ($P < .001$ for all 3). Having fewer reviews was associated with higher variance in ratings between PRWs for a given surgeon (odds ratio 0.99, $P = .001$). All surgeons below the 25th percentile with respect to the number of reviews that had been written about them were eliminated. Of the remaining surgeons ($n = 3054$), the median composite score was 4.11 out of 5, interquartile range (3.69, 4.44). Surgeons had higher median modified composite scores if they were fellowship-trained ($P = .0001$) or graduated from a top 25 medical school ($P = .0117$), but not if they graduated from a top 25 residency ($P = .1056$). Surgeons located in major cities had higher median composite scores ($P = .0025$). CONCLUSION:

Online ratings for neurosurgeons must be evaluated in context. Median ratings are generally high, but variable between websites. Median scores also vary among regions and practice settings. Higher scores were associated with ranking of medical school, recent graduation, and fellowship training completion [1].

Only time will tell whether these ratings are worthwhile or worthless as public understanding prevails over perception [2].

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Cloney M, Hopkins B, Shlobin N, Dahdaleh NS. Online Ratings of Neurosurgeons: An Examination of Web Data and its Implications. Neurosurgery. 2018 Apr 3. doi: 10.1093/neuros/nyy064. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 29618127.

2)
Dahdaleh NS. In Reply: Online Ratings of Neurosurgeons: An Examination of Web Data and its Implications. Neurosurgery. 2019 May 2. pii: nyz119. doi: 10.1093/neuros/nyz119. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 31049570.