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HOSPITALS' ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE PHYSICIAN REVIEW SYSTEMS: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

In line with the growing adoption of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and online reviews in different contexts including healthcare, hospitals have started offering physician review systems. After visiting a doctor, patients receive a satisfaction survey, rate their physician, and write comments about their visit. This information is then published on the hospital's website so that future patients can learn about the quality of care provided by physicians and make informed decisions on which doctors to choose accordingly.

Given that offering and administering physician review systems by hospitals is a relatively new phenomenon, very few studies have examined it. In the present study, we seek to understand the types and characteristics of the hospitals in the northeast United States that offer online physician reviews. We compiled a list of 1007 hospitals located in the nine states in that region including Connecticut (CT), Maine (ME), Massachusetts (MA), New Hampshire (NH), New York (NY), New Jersey (NJ), Pennsylvania (PA), Rhode Island (RI), and Vermont (VT). We then visited the hospitals' websites and collected information on whether they provided online reviews of physicians, and if they did, what care quality criteria they included in those reviews.

We found that 70 (6.95%) of the 1007 hospitals published patient reviews of physicians on their websites. None of the hospitals in CT, ME, NH, RI, and VT was among the 70 hospitals. In terms of hospital ownership, 9.09% of the 671 non-profit hospitals in that region provided online physician reviews, whereas that percentage for proprietary and government/state-owned hospitals was less than 2%. We also found that 10.44% of the general acute care hospitals posted reviews of physicians on their websites, whereas only 2.38%, 1.49%, and 0.83% of the long-term care, rehabilitation, and psychiatric centers, respectively, provided online physician reviews. Out of the 70 hospitals with online reviews, 67 hospitals used either the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) survey or an extended version of it developed and administered by a company named Press Ganey Associates. Each of the 67 hospitals used a selection of the standard questionnaire items and adjusted the wording of the items based on their needs and characteristics.

Our results imply that there is opportunity for other hospitals in the United States to take advantage of online physician review systems to evaluate and improve the quality of care they provide to their patients.

Keywords

Online physician reviews, online physician ratings, physician review websites, physician rating websites, Press Ganey Associates, CAHPS.