

# The impact of web-based ratings on physician selection

<b>Submission date</b> 11/06/2019	<b>Recruitment status</b> No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
<b>Registration date</b> 13/06/2019	<b>Overall study status</b> Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b> 01/07/2019	<b>Condition category</b> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data

## Plain English summary of protocol

### Background and study aims

Physician review websites have empowered prospective patients to acquire information about physicians. However, little is known about how Web-based ratings on different aspects of a physician may affect patients' selection of physicians differently.

Objective: The objectives of this study were to examine (1) how patients weigh ratings on a physician's technical skills and interpersonal skills in their selection of physicians and (2) whether and how people's choice of a primary care physician versus a specialist is affected differently by Web-based ratings.

### Who can participate?

Anyone over the age of 18 living in the USA can participate.

### What does the study involve?

Participants are asked to view a screenshot of a webpage of a (faux) physician review site with manipulations on the doctor type (general physician vs. speciality), patients' ratings (interpersonal and technical skills), and the order of the ratings presented. Participants were instructed to go to a questionnaire on the next page once they feel they have a good understanding of the webpage and can answer questions about it.

### What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

none

### Where is the study run from?

Derby Hall, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

### When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

March to April 2017

### Who is funding the study?

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University

Who is the main contact?

Dr Siyue Li,  
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## Contact information

### Type(s)

Scientific

### Contact name

Dr Siyue Li

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## Additional identifiers

### EudraCT/CTIS number

Nil known

### IRAS number

### ClinicalTrials.gov number

Nil known

### Secondary identifying numbers

2017B0066

## Study information

### Scientific Title

The impact of web-based ratings on patient choice of a primary care physician versus a specialist: a randomized controlled experiment

### Study objectives

RQ1: Are people more willing to choose a physician with higher ratings on technical skills than on interpersonal skills, or a physician with higher ratings on interpersonal skills than on technical skills?

H1: People are more willing to choose a specialist who has higher ratings on technical skills than

on interpersonal skills, compared with a primary care physician who has the same ratings.  
H2: People are more willing to choose a primary care physician who has higher ratings on interpersonal skills than on technical skills, compared with a specialist who has the same ratings.

### **Ethics approval required**

Old ethics approval format

### **Ethics approval(s)**

Approved 03/01/2017, The Institutional Review Board at The Ohio State University (300 Research Administration building, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1063; +1(614) 688-8457; stoddard.13@osu.edu), ref: 2017B0066.

### **Study design**

Interventional randomised controlled trial

### **Primary study design**

Interventional

### **Secondary study design**

Randomised controlled trial

### **Study setting(s)**

Internet/virtual

### **Study type(s)**

Other

### **Participant information sheet**

Not available in web format, please use the contact details below to request a patient information sheet

### **Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

Healthy volunteers

### **Interventions**

This experiment was conducted using Qualtrics Labs, Inc. software ([www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com)). A 2 (ratings on communication skills: high vs. moderate) x 2 (ratings on technical skills: high vs. moderate) x 2 (physician speciality: general practitioner vs. specialist) x 2 (order of ratings: interpersonal skills first vs. technical skills first) factorial design was employed in the study. To control for the ordering effect of ratings, we either placed ratings on interpersonal skills before or after ratings on technical skills.

Participants were recruited on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and were offered one dollar for their participation. They were randomly assigned to one of the 16 experimental conditions and then asked to view a screenshot of a webpage of a (faux) physician review site with manipulations on the doctor type (general physician vs. speciality), patients' ratings (interpersonal and technical skills), and the order of the ratings presented. Participants were instructed to go to a questionnaire on the next page once they feel they have a good understanding of the webpage and can answer questions about it. Before exposure to their randomly assigned experimental condition, the participant was reading a brief narrative, explaining that they need to either choose a primary care physician or a specialist.

A total of 16 versions of the faux PRS pages will be created for this study. Each page contains four rating categories about a faux physician, including two items on technical skills and two on interpersonal skills. In conditions with high skills in certain aspects, a physician receives 5 stars on the corresponding items. In conditions with a moderate level of skills, the physician receives 3 stars on the matching items.

**Intervention Type**

Behavioural

**Primary outcome measure**

1. Perception of the physician measured using a novel questionnaire.
2. Willingness to select the physician measured using a novel questionnaire.

**Secondary outcome measures**

1. Online health information seeking measured using a novel questionnaire.
2. Previous health experiences (i.e. surgery) measured using a novel questionnaire.
3. Demographic information measured using a novel questionnaire.

**Overall study start date**

15/01/2017

**Completion date**

12/04/2017

**Eligibility****Key inclusion criteria**

- 1 At least 18 years old
2. Live in the United States
3. Proficient in the English language

**Participant type(s)**

Healthy volunteer

**Age group**

Adult

**Lower age limit**

18 Years

**Sex**

Both

**Target number of participants**

900

**Total final enrolment**

608

**Key exclusion criteria**

1. Failed the attention checks
2. Spent no time or less than 5 seconds on the Web page

**Date of first enrolment**

01/03/2017

**Date of final enrolment**

12/04/2017

**Locations****Countries of recruitment**

United States of America

**Study participating centre**

Derby Hall, The Ohio State University

154 N. Oval Mall

Columbus

United States of America

43210

**Sponsor information****Organisation**

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University

**Sponsor details**

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**Sponsor type**

University/education

**ROR**

<https://ror.org/00rs6vg23>

**Funder(s)**

**Funder type**

University/education

**Funder Name**

Ohio State University

**Alternative Name(s)**

The Ohio State University, Ohio State, Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College, OSU, tOSU

**Funding Body Type**

Government organisation

**Funding Body Subtype**

Universities (academic only)

**Location**

United States of America

## Results and Publications

**Publication and dissemination plan**

The paper was accepted by Journal of Medical Internet Research

**Intention to publish date**

30/06/2019

**Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan**

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are not expected to be made available due to IRB approval restrictions.

**IPD sharing plan summary**

Not expected to be made available

**Study outputs**

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
<a href="#">Results article</a>	results	28/06/2019	01/07/2019	Yes	No