

The impact of web-based ratings on physician selection

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

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Contact information

Type(s)

Scientific

Contact name

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number

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.

Primary study design

Interventional

Study design

Interventional randomised controlled trial

Study type(s)

Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Healthy volunteers

Interventions

This experiment was conducted using Qualtrics Labs, Inc. software (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(s)

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

Key secondary outcome(s)

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.

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

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Lower age limit

18 Years

Sex

All

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

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

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?
Results article	results	28/06/2019	01/07/2019	Yes	No