

Monitoring Online Reviews

Patient critiques are nothing new, but today's tremendous Internet presence ups the ante on reputation management.

BY LYNN HOMISAK, PRT

To Our Readers: There are no foolish questions. Chances are that if you have a question or concern in your practice, others are experiencing a similar situation. We're here to help. PM [doctor and staff] readers are encouraged to submit questions to lynn@soshms.com which will be printed and answered in this column anonymously.

Topic: Online Reviews

Dear Lynn,

Do patients pay that much attention to online reviews? How concerned should I be if I receive a bad review?

Based on notable sources, reviews are a major source of reference



Figure 1

ing with a new healthcare provider and preferred choosing providers rated four out of five stars or higher.

- Among Millennials, 55% preferred a provider because of their online reviews.

are nothing new. However, years ago, word of mouth was limited to verbal conversation. Today, with the development of a tremendous Internet presence, patients who want to spread the word about their good (or bad) experience have the ability to do so at lightning speeds, reaching innumerable seekers of information. In the same way negative reviews can be damaging to a business, positive reviews can be a marketing catalyst in almost every industry.

People rely on reviews for: buying major items like cars/appliances, dinner reservations, show tickets, travel plans, and almost every item purchased on Amazon. Researching a medical provider is no different. When making decisions, details matter and reviews carry a great deal of weight in almost every case.

Here are three practical reasons why monitoring your reviews is advantageous.

- 1) They strengthen first impres-

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for patients choosing their medical providers. You should be concerned enough to monitor what patients are saying about you and your practice.

Recent data confirms this. Refer to The 2022 *Healthcare Trends Report*,¹ compiled by YouGov on behalf of Reputation that includes responses from over 1,000 consumers between ages 27 and 64.

- 72% of consumers read online ratings and reviews to consider book-

- Online provider reviews are the third most crucial driver in consumers' decision to select a new healthcare provider, after insurance acceptance and location.

Since prospective new patients will not have the pleasure of meeting with you face-to-face to experience your expertise, the next best thing is "word of mouth." Of course, everyone is a critic and patient critiques

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sions. We used to think patients don't form their first impression of a medical office until they step foot into one. Then, we learned, no, it is the first telephone conversation that influences their impression. The truth is, today in our digital age, patients will look to the computer as their first step in selecting a physician. Your website, your online reviews, and even social media are instrumental in their very first impression of your practice. And this impression sticks.

2) They help preserve your practice reputation and allow you to address comments (good or bad). Written reviews allow you to discover what your patients say about your practice and when necessary, follow up and address any negative comments to build a more positive online presence.

In a more extensive survey,² sixty-six percent of respondents feel it's "very" or "moderately important" for providers to respond publicly to online reviews, so addressing complaints head-on (without violating HIPAA laws) is a smart strategy.

By keeping a finger on the pulse of all reviews, you can address any



more assertive and take the necessary initiative to remedy it.

Address any negative reviews to minimize their influence. You also want to encourage patients who verbally compliment their visit by writing about their satisfactory ex-

perience. Responding to a patient's positive comment is a good business strategy, so make someone's day and thank them for posting!

3) They enhance care delivery. When browsing reviews, patients welcome (read: CRAVE; take to heart)

or a little bit of sarcasm. Either way, be assured that there are alternatives that can prevent you from making unnecessary purchases and keep everyone on the same page.

Topic: Communication Disconnect

Dear Lynn,

I must speak a language other than English in my office because things I ask for never get done in the timeframe I expect.

Your issue sounds like more of a breakdown in communication rather than a language barrier. Not sure if your proposed solution involves truth

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bad ones and establish to negative reviewers that you are committed to resolve their issues and earn back their trust. If addressed and resolved, some patients will even agree to take their negative post down.

Typically, if a high percentage of good reviews can offset one or two negative reviews, the few negative ones are perceived as outliers. However, don't ignore something because it puts you in an uncomfortable place. Bad reviews do not cease to exist because they are ignored, so be

specific commentary related to other patients' experiences. Before pulling the plug on which DPM they choose to see, they look for comments relative to quality of care, the doctor's acumen, expertise, listening skills, bedside manner, diagnosis accuracy, staffing courtesy, professionalism, and expediency of appointments. These remarks are telling. They will help you identify your strengths as well as those areas that may need improvement.

Feel that all this is just too much work for which you just don't have

Let's say you want a certain task completed or a patient scheduled as soon as possible. So, you preface those instructions with the acronym ASAP, expecting as one might, an immediate result. To your staffer, however, ASAP may translate as soon as it (IS) possible for him or her to complete this task, or as soon as an appointment is available in the schedule.

Moving forward, to prevent misinterpretation, you might try using "B.E.E." when something needs to be done with expediency. It conveys

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greater urgency, as in, drop what you are doing and get this done “Before Everything Else.” Nothing vague about that.

“Later” is another common word that can easily be misconstrued, beg-

ging the questions: When is later? Later today? Tomorrow? Next week? To be more precise, you might explain what you mean by “later.” If you meant “by the end of today,” say so. Confusion eliminated.

Those are just two examples of how words we choose matter. Un-

less one clearly relays all the details (or instructions), another will interpret or do things the way they THINK they understand them. This may not necessarily result in the expected or desired outcome, leaving not one, but two disgruntled parties. Turns out, words alone (without explanation) are very often the source of misunderstanding and in turn, mistakes.

Care to test this concept in real life? Give every staffer a sheet of paper. Then shout out vague instructions on what they need to do. “Fold the sheet of paper. Tear off the right corner. Fold it again. Tear off the left corner.”

After everyone has unfolded their paper (Figure 1), none (if any) will look the same because everyone interpreted your instructions differently. If you had given explicit instructions (i.e., clarity), “Fold the paper in half lengthwise. Tear 1/2” inch off the upper right-hand corner...etc.” each sheet would be identical when unfolded. Use this technique often in your communication presentations when making the point of clarification. It never disappoints.

Bridge that communication gap by explaining exactly what you want to your staff. Then, use the money you would have spent on an unnecessary language tool to take them to lunch instead! **PM**

References

¹ <https://patientengagementhit.com/news/72-of-patients-view-online-reviews-when-selecting-a-new-provider>

² https://www.softwareadvice.com/resources/how-patients-use-online-reviews/?_gl=1*_nhotxl*_gcl*_au*_MTIw-MzYyNTg0MC4xNjg3MjgxMTY0#1



Ms. Lynn Homisak, President of SOS Healthcare Management Solutions, carries a Certificate in Human Resource Studies from Cornell University School of Industry and Labor Relations. She is the 2010 recipient of Podiatry Management’s Lifetime Achievement

Award and was inducted into the PM Hall of Fame. She is also an Editorial Advisor for Podiatry Management Magazine and is recognized nationwide as a speaker, writer, and expert in staff and human resource management.