

Publication

One Decade of Online Patient Feedback: Longitudinal Analysis of Data From a German Physician Rating Website.

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Feedback from patients is an essential element of a patient-oriented health care system. Physician rating websites (PRWs) are a key way patients can provide feedback online. This study analyzes an entire decade of online ratings for all medical specialties on a German PRW.; The aim of this study was to examine how ratings posted on a German PRW have developed over the past decade. In particular, it aimed to explore (1) the distribution of ratings according to time-related aspects (year, month, day of the week, and hour of the day) between 2010 and 2019, (2) the number of physicians with ratings, (3) the average number of ratings per physician, (4) the average rating, (5) whether differences exist between medical specialties, and (6) the characteristics of the patients rating physicians.; All scaled-survey online ratings that were posted on the German PRW jameda between 2010 and 2019 were obtained.; In total, 1,906,146 ratings were posted on jameda between 2010 and 2019 for 127,921 physicians. The number of rated physicians increased constantly from 19,305 in 2010 to 82,511 in 2018. The average number of ratings per rated physicians increased from 1.65 (SD 1.56) in 2010 to 3.19 (SD 4.69) in 2019. Overall, 75.2% (1,432,624/1,906,146) of all ratings were in the best rating category of "very good," and 5.7% (107,912/1,906,146) of the ratings were in the lowest category of "insufficient." However, the mean of all ratings was 1.76 (SD 1.53) on the German school grade 6-point rating scale (1 being the best) with a relatively constant distribution over time. General practitioners, internists, and gynecologists received the highest number of ratings (343,242, 266,899, and 232,914, respectively). Male patients, those of higher age, and those covered by private health insurance gave significantly ($P < .001$) more favorable evaluations compared to their counterparts. Physicians with a lower number of ratings tended to receive ratings across the rating scale, while physicians with a higher number of ratings tended to have better ratings. Physicians with between 21 and 50 online ratings received the lowest ratings (mean 1.95, SD 0.84), while physicians with >100 ratings received the best ratings (mean 1.34, SD 0.47).; This study is one of the most comprehensive analyses of PRW ratings to date. More than half of all German physicians have been rated on jameda each year since 2016, and the overall average number of ratings per rated physicians nearly doubled over the decade. Nevertheless, we could also observe a decline in the number of ratings over the last 2 years. Future studies should investigate the most recent development in the number of ratings on both other German and international PRWs as well as reasons for the heterogeneity in online ratings by medical specialty.

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