

Hospitals' Facebook Ratings Reflect Care Quality



A study which assessed the relationship between social media and healthcare quality evaluations reveals that hospital ratings submitted by patients and consumers via social media, such as Facebook's five-star system, accurately reflect patient satisfaction and care quality as measured by readmission rates. The finding that feedback from user-generated social media correlates with patient outcomes is a reminder of its value for hospital leaders interested in developing programs for quality improvement.

Social Media Ratings and Readmission Rates

Researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) analysed data from the Health Compare website, which is sponsored by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. An investigation of 30-day readmission rates for 4,800 US hospitals showed that more than 80 percent had rates that were in range of the expected national average. Significantly lower readmission rates were reported by 7 percent of hospitals, and 8 percent reported rates significantly above the national average.

The hospitals with low readmission rate were more likely to have Facebook pages, compared to high-readmission hospitals (93 versus 82 percent). For both groups, more than 80 percent of the Facebook pages provided the five-star rating system. For each one-star increase in the Facebook rating, there was a more than five-fold increase in the likelihood that the hospital had a low readmission rate.

"While we can't say conclusively that social media ratings are fully representative of the actual quality of care, this research adds support to the idea that social media has quantitative value in assessing the areas of patient satisfaction - something we are hoping to study next - and other quality outcomes," said McKinley Glover, MD, MHS, a clinical fellow in MGH's Department of Radiology.

The Power of Data Analytics and Social Media

The potential of data analytics to drive healthcare delivery is illustrated by the study's results. "...This study shows there is opportunity and significant value in sentiment analysis - the use of social media data to track public opinion - as it pertains to health care," said Garry Choy, MD, MBA, the assistant chief medical information officer of advanced technologies at the Mass. General Physicians Organization and a radiologist at MGH.

"Hospitals should be aware that social media ratings may influence patient perceptions of hospitals and potentially their health care choices. Hospitals and other healthcare organisations should also be aware of the potential message they send by not using social media. Members of the general public should be encouraged to provide accurate feedback on their health care experiences via social media, but should not rely solely on such ratings to make their health care decisions," said Glover.

Glover and Choy co-authored the study along with Omid Khalilzadeh, MD, MPH; Anand Prabhakar, MD; Pari Pandharipande; and Scott Gazelle, MD, MPH, PhD. The study has been published in the Journal of General Internal Medicine.

Source: [Massachusetts General Hospital](http://www.massgeneral.org)

Image Credit: Massachusetts General Hospital

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