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Before You Trust Online Hospital or Doctor Ratings, You Need to Read This



When you need help finding a great restaurant or hotel, it makes sense to head to websites like Yelp and TripAdvisor, which calculate ratings based on user reviews. But when it comes to choosing the best hospital, you might want to take a different approach.

 Although there are many websites that rate and rank hospitals, there are important differences between those that rely on crowd-sourced feedback and ones that use hard data and incorporate insights from physicians and consumer advocacy groups. While both types of sites can do an excellent job of providing information about the typical patient experience at a given hospital, those that are based on only user feedback won't always give you accurate info about the quality of the care. [^]

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A recent study published in the journal *Health Services Research* (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1475-6773.13026>) looked at hospital ratings from crowd-sourced websites (Facebook, Google Reviews, and Yelp) to see how well they matched up with ratings generated by Hospital Compare (<https://www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare/search.html>), a U.S. government-run site that uses a more comprehensive set of data to calculate ratings.

Although more than 60 percent of the best-ranked hospitals on the crowd-sourced sites were also top-rated by Hospital Compare, 20 percent of those that were highly rated by the crowd-sourcing sites were ranked as the worst on Hospital Compare.

The main reason for this discrepancy: Crowd-sourced sites don't use any clinical data, such as the number of post-surgical complications, the percent of people whose condition improves after a procedure, and mortality rates.

In other words, Facebook, Google Reviews, and Yelp focus solely on how happy the patients who wrote reviews were with their personal experience — but they don't necessarily tell you how likely you are to be treated properly and safely.

“We wish that people would understand that even if hospitals are not scoring well on Facebook in user reviews, they could have excellent clinical scores,” study author Victoria Perez, PhD, of Indiana University in Bloomington, told [MedPage Today](https://www.medpagetoday.com/hospitalbasedmedicine/generalhospitalpractice/75111) (<https://www.medpagetoday.com/hospitalbasedmedicine/generalhospitalpractice/75111>).



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When choosing a hospital, it's smart to do your homework, and online research can certainly be part of that. But generally speaking, sites that utilize government sources will give you more reliable info than crowd-sourced sites like Yelp and Facebook. Aside from Hospital Compare, consider visiting [WhyNottheBest.org](https://whynotthebest.org) (<https://whynotthebest.org>) and [CareChex.com](https://carechex.com) (<https://carechex.com/default.aspx>).



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