

When selecting a child's doctor, families prefer grapevine over online ratings (w/ Video)

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(Medical Xpress)—Numerous websites are available to rate just about any service or product: restaurant food, hotel service and even a pediatrician's care. However, a new poll from the University of Michigan shows that only 25 percent of parents say they consider doctor rating websites very important in their search for a child's physician.

But the latest University of Michigan Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health did show that younger parents, those under 30, were more likely to say that online doctor ratings are very important. And mothers were more likely than fathers to say that those ratings are very important.

"More and more families are going online not only to find out about medical conditions but also in their search for the right doctor for their child. What we found in the poll was that the perceived importance of online ratings appears to differ widely based on factors such as parent age and gender," says David A. Hanauer, a [primary care](#) pediatrician and clinical assistant professor of [pediatrics](#) at U-M. Hanauer collaborated with the National Poll on Children's Health regarding this study of doctor rating websites.

The poll showed that when it comes to online doctor ratings, mothers (30%) are more likely than fathers (19%) to think such ratings are very important. Parents under age 30 (44%) are more likely than parents 30 or older (21%) to think doctor rating websites are very important.

"These data suggest that younger families are more likely to rely on online ratings, which means over time we'd expect the use of these websites will keep increasing," Hanauer says.

In the poll, 92 percent of parents rated "accepts my health insurance" as very important and 65 percent rated a convenient office location as very important.

A doctor's years of experience and the [grapevine](#) or word of mouth also were rated very important, by 52 and 50 percent, respectively.

But nearly one-third of parents (30%) who have gone online to view doctors' ratings reported that they have selected a doctor for their children due to good ratings or reviews. And nearly one-third of parents (30%) reported avoiding a doctor for their children due to bad ratings or reviews.

Very few adults (5%) say they have ever posted ratings or reviews of doctors.

"The small percentage of people who actually post reviews suggests that people who depend on online ratings may not be getting an accurate picture of a pediatrician's care," Hanauer says.

So should parents trust or seek out an online rating? That's hard to assess, says Matthew M. Davis, M.D., M.A.P.P., director of the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health.

"Importantly, there is currently no oversight or regulation for rating websites that collect 'crowdsourced' information about doctors. It is hard to verify the reliability of the ratings or whether they are subject to manipulation," says Davis.

"But it is worth noting that word of mouth from family and friends is not regulated, either. On the other hand, those sources of information may be perceived as more directly accountable by parents seeking the information, and therefore more

trustworthy."

More information: Full report: C.S. Mott
Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's
Health

[mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/how-select-child's-
doctor-parents-prefer-grapevine-online](http://mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/how-select-child's-doctor-parents-prefer-grapevine-online)

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