



Joining the Movement: Knowing When Transparency Is Right for Your Organization

By Andrew Ibbotson, National Research Corporation

As patients face increasing financial responsibility for their own healthcare, they are turning to online reviews to help them determine the quality of care they'll receive from their local health system. Robust health system Web sites with in-depth physician biographies and awards information are no longer enough for today's patients. More and more, patients are adding online reviews to the list of resources they use to make more informed decisions about where to spend their healthcare dollars. In fact, one out of three consumers report that looking at online reviews is their first step when searching for a new doctor.¹ With an average lifetime value of \$1.4 million per patient, you want your doctors and hospitals to show up at the top of patients' Google search results. Most importantly, you want the information they see to be accurate and verifiable.

This is one of the main drivers of the transparency movement in healthcare. Hospital systems large and small (such as Cleveland Clinic and OU Medicine in Oklahoma) have acted quickly to implement a system that automatically converts patient experiences from their CAHPS surveys into verified patient ratings and reviews, published on their own Web sites. As this trend accelerates over the next few years, if your organization is not sharing your patient experience ratings with the public, patients will be likely to question why.

The benefits to the consumer are clear, but what are the benefits for the doctor and the health system? Simply put, better patient experience leads to better clinical outcomes, more reimbursements, and increased consumer loyalty. Transparently sharing patient reviews offers your physicians ongoing micro-feedback that can help them understand how they are performing and adjust the way they deliver care and communicate with patients.

¹ 2015 Healthcare Consumer Trends Survey, National Research Corporation.

These adjustments can quickly move the needle in overall patient experience. Doctors at OU Medicine improved their patient experience scores from the 71st to the 78th percentile in CG-CAHPS performance after the health system launched an internal transparency initiative; Cleveland Clinic reported a 20 percent increase in their patient experience scores after making their data transparent internally (i.e., letting all of a clinician's colleagues see his or her data). An internal launch can help doctors overcome any fear associated with publishing feedback online, and the increase in patient satisfaction can result in increased patient retention. (Notably, replacing an existing customer can cost anywhere from five to 25 times more than acquiring a new one.)²

Benefits of Transparency

More effectively engage patients online:

- Provide them with reliable patient experience data to make better decisions.
- Build confidence and trust.

Influence clinician behavior to improve clinical and service quality:

- Provide physicians with their own ratings and comments.
- Provide information, tools, and education to clinicians who want to improve.

Control your online reputation:

- Own Google search results.
- Paint a more accurate picture of patient satisfaction.

² Amy Gallo, "The Value of Keeping the Right Customers," *Harvard Business Review*, October 29, 2014.

When a system is ready to take their reviews public, the benefits are even greater. In the case of OU Medicine, patient experience scores rose once again after publishing reviews on its Web site: moving from the 78th to the 88th percentile nationally. Sentara Healthcare System saw a 25 percent increase in patient visits to its urgent care clinics since publishing verified patient ratings using National Research Corporation's Transparency Solution starting in February 2016. These up-to-date reviews provide valuable new content that pushes your Web site to the top of Google's search rankings, and since 77 percent of

consumers begin their healthcare search online, that's where you want to be.

The transparency movement has undeniable momentum and benefits, so how do you avoid being left behind? Publishing your own verified patient ratings and reviews allows you to take control of your online presence and reputation, build consumer trust, and drive patient acquisition. As such, we consider this an important strategic issue for health system boards and senior leadership to focus on now.

The Governance Institute thanks Andrew Ibbotson, Vice President and General Manager, National Research Corporation, for contributing this article. For more information about National Research Corporation's Transparency Solution, please contact aibbotson@nationalresearch.com.

