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Many of us have been there as a patient. Whether you just came down with a symptom or received a referral to a specialist, you research the best provider for your care. It’s one of the most important health decisions you’ll make.

Your current and prospective patients are doing the same – **30 million healthcare consumers are searching for a physician online each month.**¹

Consumers are using patient feedback from rating and review sites like Healthgrades, Vitals, Facebook and hundreds of other sources to help select a physician like they would use reviews on TripAdvisor to find the best travel destination. The information on these sites is a prospective patient’s first impression of your physicians. The challenge is healthcare organizations do not have control over reviews posted to these sites and typically can’t verify if the reviewers were actual patients – and they can affect what physician healthcare consumers select.

However, the opportunity is there for healthcare organizations to effectively guide and inform patient choice. A growing number are now taking their own CAHPS survey data and committing to full transparency by publishing all positive and negative reviews on their physician profile pages.

By taking this approach, organizations are setting themselves apart from competitors in their market and better positioning their reviews against third-party content. Not only that, making all survey data available online drives physician accountability and performance, ultimately improving patient experience, acquisition and loyalty.

Moving towards transparency is vital in today’s world of healthcare consumerism. Organizations must meet their patients’ need for accurate health and physician information that they can trust. With the help of a technological solution, internal readiness and a clear strategy, healthcare organizations are increasingly becoming the trusted voice for their patients.

¹ 2014 Pew Research Center, The Social Life of Health Information
84% use online reviews to evaluate physicians

80% trust online reviews as much as recommendations

37% avoid physician with negative reviews

47% go out-of-network for physicians with more favorable reviews

Online Physician Ratings & Reviews’ Impact

ONLINE PRESENCE & SEO

One of our clients that implemented a transparency program found that 52% of consumers visiting their physician pages came directly from search.

Many healthcare organizations already have a wealth of content about physicians from their patient experience surveys, which is typically more detailed than feedback posted on third-party ratings and reviews sites.

On average, physicians have 5 reviews across online review and rating sites. Our clients average over 50 reviews per physician profile page.

Publishing verified patient survey data to physician profile pages is a critical new step for healthcare systems looking to attract new patients and remain competitive against other organizations.

Your physicians will be better represented online, including improved positioning in search results, with greater volume of patient feedback. In fact, physician profile pages are becoming the new landing page.
Online Physician Ratings & Reviews’ Impact

CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT & TRUST

Physician profile pages with patient feedback generate more online engagement than those without them. One of our clients has seen an average of 18 reviews viewed by online consumers per provider.

Consumers find the patient feedback to be helpful during their physician selection process. One client discovered that 85% of their consumers found star ratings and patient comments to be very helpful during their physician selection process.

Consumers find the reviews give an accurate representation of the physician and the comments are especially helpful when they do not have a referral.

Also, publishing all survey data provides consumers with credible reviews that can help inform patient decision making.

According to a study by Northwestern University’s Spiegel Research Center, consumers perceive ratings closer to a 5.0-star rating as too good to be true.

Publishing both positive and negative patient comments can capture consumer trust and improve patient acquisition.
Making Preparations to Adopt Transparency

GAINING PHYSICIAN BUY-IN

Though transparency is rapidly growing in healthcare, certain steps are important to ensure a successful initiative, such as gaining physician buy-in, determining resources and establishing internal processes.

Gaining physician buy-in is a top priority for many healthcare organizations. Some physicians can be resistant to transparency initially due to concerns around negative comments being published online that can impact their reputation.

In order to get physicians on board, it’s important to have an executive assigned to champion the initiative and make sure everyone in the organization is on the same page. Proactive communications with physicians is recommended.

Having leadership clearly define how the program works and discussing its value for consumers and physicians is key.

Sharing a case study highlighting another healthcare organization’s success and containing best practices will help you validate the program.

The sponsor will also need to set the expectation that all physicians will be included in the initiative – no opt-outs. We suggest hosting an open forum for all physicians to attend and ask any questions they might have and voice their concerns.

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PHYSICIAN CONCERNS

- Value to consumers and patients
- Publicly posting low ratings
- Publicly posting negative comments
- Validity of reviews
- Impact of one unhappy patient
Another approach we recommend is internally sharing survey feedback with physicians before starting the initiative and even showing them sample scores. Physicians often learn that they have much better scores and comments from the survey data compared to third-party rating and review sites. It’s a motivating factor for them to have this information posted on their physician profile pages.

To give physicians a more hands-on approach of previewing their comments, we recommend implementing an internal “soft launch.” Physicians get access to the solution at a read-only level to see what patients are saying about their care, helping them become more engaged in the process. In addition, developing an internal review committee for the program is important for ensuring physicians that patient comments will be vetted for publishing online.

We suggest creating guidelines that allow physicians to appeal comments to the committee based on their validity. This gives physicians a voice in the process.

“When we started really digging into this and showing our physicians what the solution would look like, we found thousands of wonderful comments about physicians, in the Press Ganey surveys, that never saw the light of day.”

Karina Jennings, AVP of Marketing, Providence Health & Services

See Developing an Internal Review Committee for more information.
RESOURCES & PROCESSES

Organizations typically have questions about internal resources and processes such as defining who will monitor the reviews and comments. Below are our recommendations on defining the make up of your transparency team, selecting a model for your internal review committee, and creating a process for reviewing and publishing feedback.

Different roles are required in this program to ensure its success, from implementation through ongoing management - and they require a time commitment. Clear communications from the person driving the initiative on the program’s direction and everyone’s responsibilities will help ensure a smooth implementation.

We recommend organizations assign these roles before starting the initiative.
Making Preparations to Adopt Transparency

RESOURCES & PROCESSES

Executive Leader

Depending on whether patient experience or marketing is leading the initiative, an executive from that department will make decisions for the organization even after the initiative is fully launched.

The executive leader will drive the organization’s transparency efforts and plays a major role in defining the organization’s star rating methodology and workflow processes.

This person answers questions like, ‘why transparency?’ and ‘why is this important for our organization?’
Making Preparations to Adopt Transparency

RESOURCES & PROCESSES

Transparency Champion

This individual is responsible for making sure everyone in the organization is on the same page, including the physicians. The champion will work to ensure physicians are comfortable with the patient survey data that will be published on their physician pages.

This person is typically in the marketing or patient experience department.
Making Preparations to Adopt Transparency

RESOURCES & PROCESSES

3rd Party Survey Provider

This is the main point of contact at the organization responsible for collecting and analyzing patient experience data. They are responsible for providing the organization with its survey data for implementation and survey assessment. The accuracy and integrity of the data collected and reported is at the foundation of a successful transparency initiative.

Review Committee

Consisting of 2-3 marketing or patient experience team members, this group is responsible for approving all reviews and responding to any appeals.

Web Service Provider

The provider is responsible for leading the development effort needed for integration on the organization’s physician profile pages. They are also responsible for display aesthetics of the star ratings on the profile pages.

See sidebar to learn how Press Ganey, our strategic partner, recommends ensuring data reliability.
A workflow system is needed to manage the comment review and approval process before going live with your organization’s transparency solution. We recommend selecting one of the two workflow models based on the size and resources available within your organization.

**Centralized Model**

With the centralized model, your organization will have members of your corporate marketing team responsible for approving the content across the entire health system. This model is appropriate for organizations that are looking to have corporate consistency across the organization.

**BENEFITS**
- **Consistent** approval process aligning with corporate policy.
- **Minimizes** potential physician bias.

**DISADVANTAGES**
- Potentially later go live date if you have fewer team members evaluating all of patient survey data before launch date.
Developing an Internal Review Committee

REVIEW MODEL

Decentralized Model
Practice managers and regional marketing teams across your organization will be responsible for reviewing all comments for their respective practice or locations. This model is appropriate for larger organizations with less bandwidth in the corporate marketing department. Also, we recommend putting together documentation outlining clear guidelines and expectations for each reviewer.

BENEFITS
Potentially quicker go live date with more employees responsible for reviewing all patient comments.

DISADVANTAGES
Less consistency without corporate policy for approval process.
Introduces potential physician bias.
Streamline Process to Review and Post Patient Feedback

WORKFLOW FOR APPROVALS

This workflow allows organizations to have two sets of eyes reviewing each comment from the imported survey data before the comment is published.

Did you know? Binary Fountain’s publishing feature gives users the ability to automate when reviews are published.
Streamline Process to Review and Post Patient Feedback

WORKFLOW FOR APPEALS

This workflow allows organizations to give their physicians access to the system. Physician access will be limited to the appeal feature and only those reviews that are relevant to the physician. We suggest having the second reviewer on the review committee inform the physician of the outcome.

Did you know? Binary Fountain’s publishing feature allows users to specify an allotted time frame for physicians to read their comments and submit an appeal if applicable before the comment is posted online.
Best Practices for Editing Patient Comments

**REMOVE PHI**

We recommend publishing all patient comments regardless of sentiment. However, we do recommend editing comments that contain Protected Health Information (PHI), profanity or libel. This approach exemplifies best practices and is an industry standard.

Edit comments to remove all PHI in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) privacy rule. Our clients use the Binary Star Ratings’ editing tool to do this. We suggest removing all type of information that could be used to identify a patient.

Sample comment with PHI before editing:

“I live on Westbrook Ave in Tarrytown so Dr. Smith’s office is pretty convenient.”

Sample comment after editing:

“I live on [...] so Dr. Smith’s office is pretty convenient.”
Best Practices for Editing Patient Comments

REMOVE REFERENCES TO OTHER PHYSICIANS

Comments are typically posted to individual physician pages. Any mention of other physicians should be moved.

Sample comment referring to another physician:

“Dr. Jones was covering for Dr. Smith when I visited. Dr. Jones was very rude.”

Sample comment after editing:

“[…] Dr. Jones was very rude.”

Other Recommendations

• Remove profanity, libel or profane responses
• Reject comments about the survey itself (e.g. ‘N/A’)
• Define standard methods for redacting content such as [...] or ***
• Do not edit patients’ comments for grammar or spelling
• If you have to redact a significant amount of content, reject the comment
PROVIDENCE HEALTH & SERVICES

PH&S made their case for transparency based on:

- Consumers have the right to transparency when selecting a physician – and expect it
- PH&S has no control over what is posted on third-party review and rating sites like Vitals and Healthgrades
- CG-CAHPS score are almost always more positive than reviews posted to third-party review sites
- Increased review volume can improve search engine rankings

After improving the accuracy of its physician directories, and building out biographies and related information, PH&S identified ratings and reviews on its physician pages as a priority for increasing consumer interest. PH&S sought a technology partner to help achieve this.
Transparency Success

PROVIDENCE HEALTH & SERVICES

In 2014, PH&S partnered with Binary Fountain to develop an online physician ratings and reviews program.

PH&S chose to pilot the solution in two of their markets in order to discover if a physician ratings and reviews program provided value to consumers. It also served as a proof of concept that physicians’ reputations would not be damaged and showed that their patient comments were predominantly positive.

The solution proved to be valuable to consumers and positive for physicians and is now deployed across the health system in over five states and four brands.

Consumers have access to information on more than 1,800 physicians and generating 5,500 patient comments per month.

PH&S uses CG-CAHPS survey data collected and analyzed by Press Ganey, and with the help of the Binary Fountain solution, aggregates star ratings for its providers.

How PH&S uses Binary Fountain:

1. PH&S collects verified patient survey data through Press Ganey
2. Binary Fountain pulls monthly survey data from Press Ganey
3. Binary Fountain generates physician star ratings
4. PH&S review committee uses Binary Fountain to approve, edit or reject comments
5. Data is published to PH&S physician profile pages
Transparency Success

PROVIDENCE HEALTH & SERVICES

PH&S’ Best Practices:

- Physicians must receive at least 30 patient ratings to have survey data published to their profile page.

- Every comment is reviewed by a review committee before posting live on the physician profile pages to protect physician and brand reputation.

- Properly communicate the reason for transparency across your organization. PH&S provided an open forum for questions and concerns.

- Physician leadership is crucial – include all physicians.

- Publish comments to an intranet to allow physicians to see what the solution will look like once it’s live.

- Only remove comments if it’s defamatory or completely inaccurate.

Physician Profile Pages

29% increase in page views for specialty care providers with star ratings

25% increase in page views for primary care providers with star ratings

87% of patients found star ratings to be helpful

85% of patients found the comments shared by other patients to be helpful

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# Transparency Readiness Assessment

**ARE YOU READY FOR TRANSPARENCY?**

Use the checklist below to evaluate your organization’s readiness for adopting a transparency strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Y/N</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you measuring patient experience?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you collecting patient surveys?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you surveying physicians?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are your physicians aware that you’re measuring patient experience?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you sharing patient experience score internally with physicians?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Are your physicians using collected patient survey data to improve the care they provide?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you collecting enough responses? <em>We recommend having at least 30 reviews per physician.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you actively monitoring your physicians’ presence across all ratings and reviews sites?</td>
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<td>Do your marketing and patient experience departments collaborate?</td>
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<td>Has your organization discussed transparency internally?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have key stakeholder and physician buy-in?</td>
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As more and more consumers turn to online physician ratings and reviews when selecting a physician, healthcare providers and their partners have a responsibility to ensure that the ratings available are objective, standardized evaluations of the patient experience that patients and physicians can trust.

These initiatives can only be as effective as the underlying data that powers them. For this reason, health systems seeking to deliver on the promise of transparency should ensure they are using the most reliable, highest-quality data to support their programs.

Press Ganey’s approach ensures the reliability of transparency data through a defined set of criteria.

**Organizations who achieve their scientifically-rigorous standards meet the following requirements:**

- 100% validation of patient responses
- Compliance with the Press Ganey Star Rating methodology
- Assurance of 30 or more survey returns per physician
- Complete reporting of every survey response
- Posting of all comments; suppressing or redacting only those containing confidential or libelous information, or with feedback unrelated to the physician or patient’s experience during the visit

Organizations that commit to an aggressive standard of data integrity and representation are positioned to succeed, while those that don’t make this a strategic priority are putting their brands at risk.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Andrew Rainey is the Executive Vice President of Corporate Strategy and Development at Binary Fountain. In this role, Andrew is responsible for driving new business and building strategic partnerships. He is a frequent speaker at healthcare industry events and is a co-author of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society’s (HIMSS) book, “Applying

Nitin Potarazu
Nitin Potarazu is the Channel Manager at Binary Fountain and manages the Press Ganey partnership. In his role, Nitin is responsible for managing all sales efforts for Binary Fountain’s transparency solution. He has helped large healthcare organizations with 4,800 physicians and small healthcare organizations with 5 physicians adopt a digital transparency solution.
About Binary Fountain
Binary Fountain is the leading provider of patient feedback management solutions designed specifically for healthcare in a single cloud-based platform. Leading organizations, large and small, rely on Binary Fountain to understand the patient experience, drive comprehensive operational intelligence throughout the organization, and engage patients with innovative transparency and reputation management solutions.

Questions about transparency? Contact us to learn more.

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