

HOW TO BECOME A **HOSPITAL** OF CHOICE

IN 2018



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“In a time of rising consumer expectations, the user experience of healthcare is falling behind.”¹

This is particularly true when healthcare is compared to Uber for personal transport, Amazon for shopping, or Open Table for picking a restaurant and making a reservation.

For the healthcare client, nearly everything is inconvenient, slow, confusing, and opaque. It is hard to determine which doctor to see and even harder to know if they are following evidence-based guidelines, taking a holistic approach to medicine, or are priced in line with the market.

What today's patients want is quality care in a clean environment from a friendly, professional and well-credentialed staff, and they want it to be more convenient and at lower prices. And just like they would search for a well-reviewed restaurant, patients will do the same for a hospital or surgeon.



Here, we explore
what hospital
attributes matter
most to patients,
how patients
select hospitals
and surgeons and
how you can be
more appealing
to patients.

HOW PATIENTS PICK ONE HOSPITAL OVER ANOTHER

In the past when someone needed a non-emergent surgical procedure, they usually went to the hospital where their doctor was affiliated. Now, other factors—including word of mouth, online research and insurance network—come into play when a person chooses a medical facility. In fact, there are several sites patients can use to evaluate hospitals, including [US News & World Report's Best Hospital Rankings](#), [Medicare's Hospital Compare](#) and [Consumer Reports' Hospital Ratings](#).

Let's not forget the role [social media](#) plays in selecting a facility; patients can instantly post their experiences to Facebook from their hospital beds or the waiting room.

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), 42% of consumers "have used social media to access health-related consumer reviews (e.g., of treatments or physicians). Nearly 30% have supported a health cause, 25% have posted about their health experience, and 20% have joined a health forum or community."²



WHAT CRITERIA DO PATIENTS USE TO CHOOSE A SURGEON?

Research from the [World Journal of Surgery](#)³ found that patients use the following criteria to choose a surgeon. As one of the most recent pieces of research on this subject, this data could offer hospital administrators rare, timely insight into the mind of the healthcare consumer.

SURGEON CHARACTERISTICS

Not surprisingly, most patients based their choice of surgeon on professional characteristics, with reputation and competency as leading factors.

In fact, surgeon reputation was the most influential factor when choosing a facility for a major surgical procedure, according to the World Journal of Surgery study.

The study asked 510 patients who underwent a high-risk procedure how they made their choice of hospital. Eighty percent of patients said surgeon reputation played a very important role in their decision making. Additionally, a surgeon's reputation was an influential factor in where they would recommend a friend or family member go for major surgery.





Other factors influencing their decision include:

- The recommendation of other doctors
- Recommendations of friends and family

Advertisements and mortality rates surprisingly played less of a role in selecting a surgeon with only 15 percent and 16 percent, respectively, of potential patients evaluating these items.

According to the study, “Patients with access to relevant public data most valued report cards that assessed a surgeon’s expertise. Additional training or certification in a particular specialty was viewed as very important, while the prestige of a residency or fellowship was only moderately influential.”

HOSPITAL ATTRIBUTES

Some patients base their choice of hospital on a hospital’s attributes rather than the surgeon’s, but the attributes being evaluated are similar.

When choosing a hospital, data from the study showed hospital reputation was the most important factor when choosing a location for a major procedure. In addition, patients also looked for hospitals that were highly valued by the community or were viewed as providers of superior care.



Patients also reported that a hospital's friendly environment and cleanliness played roles in facility selection.

But according to the World Journal of Surgery's study, there has been a movement over the last several years to a regionalization of surgeries, which show a strong volume–outcome relationship:

“Some patients may use hospital volume as an indicator of hospital quality. This idea that patients may choose hospitals based in part on surgical case volume has been validated in the past. Yet in these instances, hospital case volume, though important for many patients, was not as important in the decision-making process as information on individual surgeons' reputations or caseloads.”

The needs of the patient are quickly evolving. They want quality care, quickly and from a reliable source. Showcasing your hospital's surgical staff, its place in the community and the friendliness of staff are all ways you can ensure more patients choose your hospital in 2018.

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Resources

1. <http://www.oliverwyman.com/content/dam/oliver-wyman/global/en/images/insights/health-life-sciences/2014/October/The-Patient-To-Consumer-Revolution.pdf>

2. <http://pwchealth.com/cgi-local/hregister.cgi/reg/health-care-social-media-report.pdf>

3. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26362880>



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