Have we gone too far with rating our health care providers?

Each of us occasionally has a 'bad' day, sometimes it happens that a dentist appointment (or other health care provider) falls exactly that day! Usually you are annoyed and even dissatisfied before you even arrive, not mentioning the very bitter end.

After the appointment you are so filled with negative emotion about this event that you decide to share this horrible experience with the world at large.

You have spewed your revenge over the RateMDs page and felt a moment of relief. Now others who have any common sense and do their homework will know better than to go to Dr X. And that is where the problem starts. Is this rating fair? Does your commentary reflect what truly happened? Was it really a bad experience, worthy of letting others know?

The issue is that there is no rebuttal mechanism. So while common criminals have the luxury of being presumed innocent before being proven guilty, health care providers are sentenced with an inappropriate rating, not even knowing who may have levied the charges against them in the first place.

One might argue that a single negative rating is rather meaningless. If the health care provider is truly stellar at what he or she does, then the weight of the evidence will pull in the individual's favour and the one or two negative statements should bear no impact on the individual, right? Wrong. Even if one single patient decides to look elsewhere because of a ‘faux review’, then both patient and health care provider suffer.

The age of the internet has brought a level of disrespect to the way we deal with people and people's issues. Virtually everyone knows someone who is far more aggressive on e-mail then they are in person. Add to that, a system designed to provide anonymity such that anyone can say anything about anyone without consequence.

That all said, I do not mean to purport that there are not legitimate concerns or complaints, but how is one to decipher which ones are worthy of reading and which ones are not if the writer is unknown, and also if the supposed perpetrator of 'bad service' does not have an opportunity to respond?

How about a message sent to the health care provider directly from the individual? If the health care provider is worth anything at all, he or she would want to know and perhaps rectify the situation. If they do not know about it, they cannot do anything about it. If someone is unwilling to voice a concern directly, chances are they are not as confident about their position as they appear to be in an anonymous forum.

Perhaps the system Uber has developed should be adopted by the health care world. While I get to rate each driver as I experience a ride, that same driver is rating me as a passenger. The fact that there is mutual evaluation perhaps leads to better mutual respect.

Dr Gary Glassman
Guest Editor