



Reputation Management Guide for Orthopedic Surgeons

Cardinal Web Solutions

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Introduction

Building strong referral source relationships is key toward maintaining a thriving practice as an orthopedic surgeon. **But did you know that nearly 75% of your prospective patients trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations.** In fact, last year alone, 68% more patients turned to online reviews when seeking out healthcare providers – including orthopedic surgeons – than in years past. It appears the average prospective patient hasn't just grown accustomed to turning to the web for advice; many prefer it. Nearly half of all patients are even willing to turn to an out-of-network surgeon, so long as that surgeon boasts favorable reviews. Take a moment to look over your online reputation. Does it inspire prospective patients to line up for an appointment, or is it scaring folks away? To make sure your reputation is working for you, let's bring it back to basics.



Mastering the Basics of Online Healthcare Reputation Management

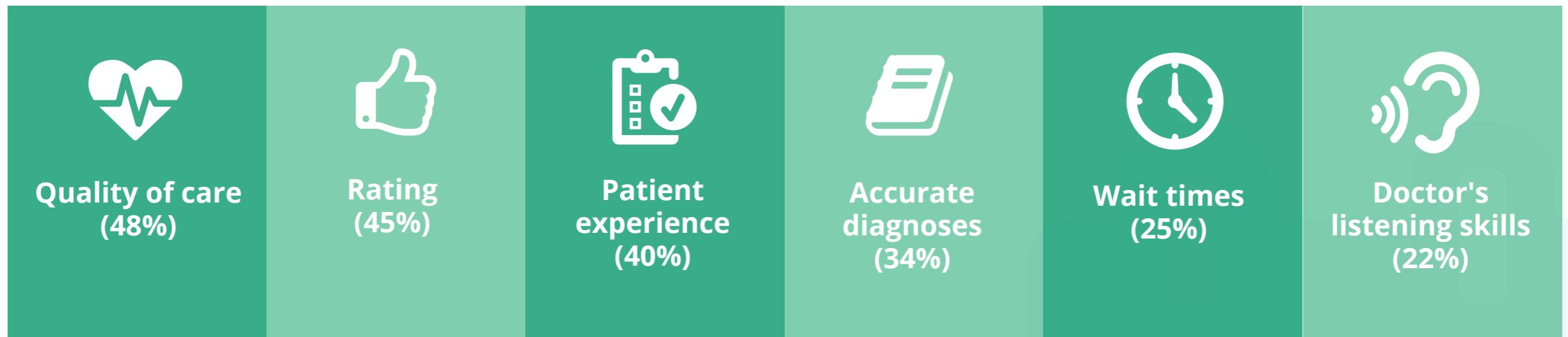
Online reputation management can be tricky. On the one hand, candid reviews are important for protecting prospective patients from an unethical orthopedic surgeon or a poorly managed practice. However, these practice and physician-related problems are pretty rare. Most of the criticism leveled at surgeons in online reviews—a long wait before an appointment, the high cost of a treatment—are systemic issues that a single physician or practice cannot

single-handedly fix. Additionally, doctor-patient confidentiality prevents physicians from directly engaging online critics. While you can't wage all-out war with an online critic, the good news is that you don't need to. And many factors outside a physician's immediate control, like wait times, actually rank as one of the least important factors for patient reviews.



How Patients Choose Whether to Schedule an Appointment with an Orthopedic Surgeon

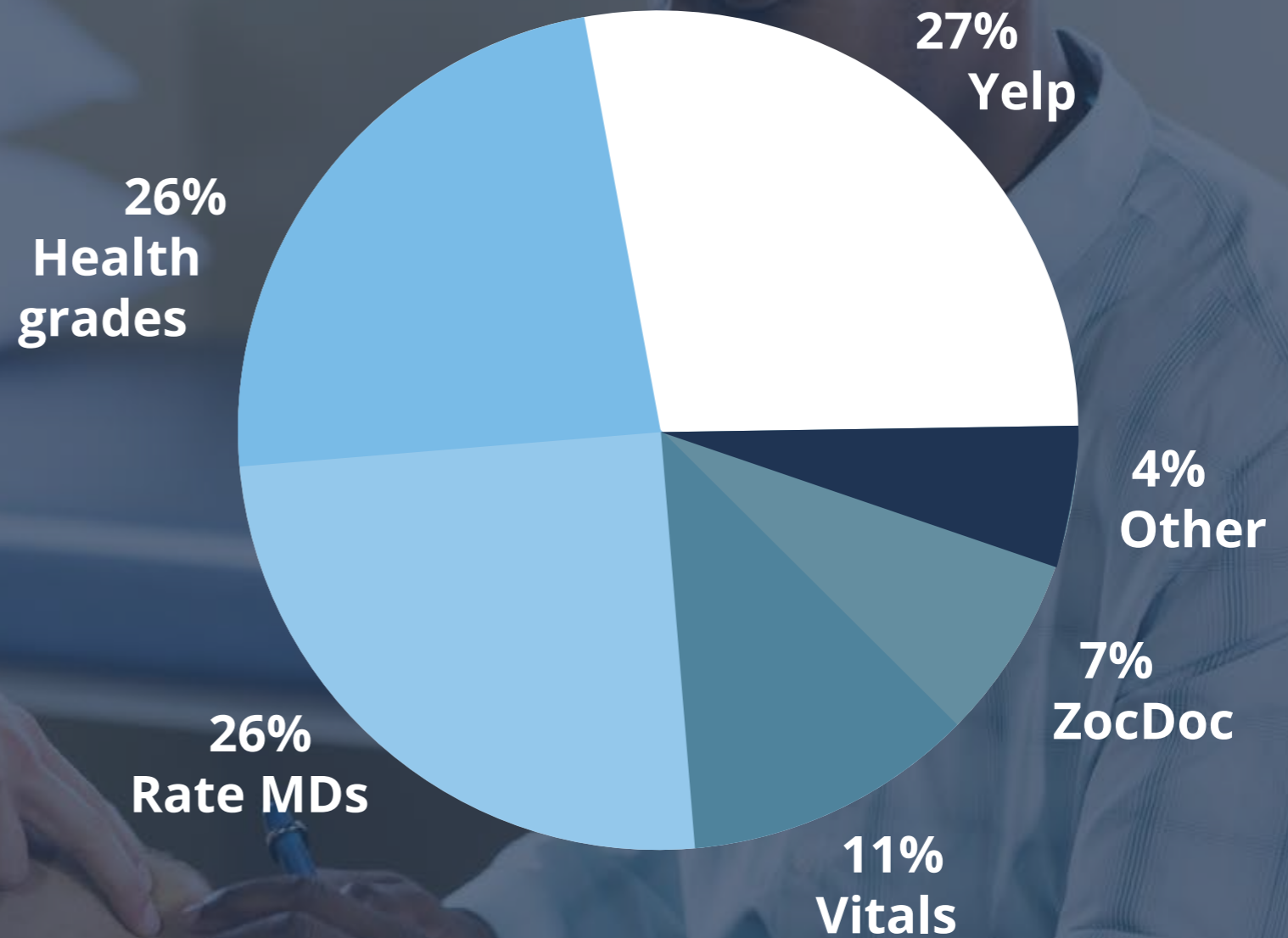
A survey of 4,000 patients using reviews found that the following components are most important when deciding whether or not to schedule an appointment with a physician or orthopedic surgeon:



In general, most surgeons are rated positively and have higher rankings for hospitals and medical practices that are associated with better medical care. Unfortunately, since physician review websites (PRWs) do not verify the authenticity of a patient's review, there's a high possibility for abuse, misinformation, and outdated information.

Tips for orthopedic surgeons:

The review sites most widely used by your patients are:





80%

of your prospective patients find online reviews just as trustworthy as personal recommendations

Remember, reviews play a crucial role in generating referral traffic and new-patient appointments. Here are a few tips to make sure that what folks find online falls in line with the message you're looking to push out:

STEP 1: Keep tabs on your profiles.

You can't improve what you don't know! Take a look at our most-widely-used review sites chart to know where you should start focusing your attention. Avoid wasting valuable time manually checking each site for new reviews. Tools like Yext and Connectivity handle this task for you.

STEP 2: Set up an online profile

Many PRWs allow surgeons to display professional profiles; use the information in your profile to control your reputation and protect against potential criticism. For example, you could highlight your willingness to accept same-day appointments or your expertise in a highly specialized area of orthopedic surgery. Use modern platforms to make sure all directory listings are up to date at all times. Remember: inaccurate listing information can damage your SEO rankings.

44%

of patients are willing to choose out-of-network surgeons if their reviews are better than in-network surgeons.

STEP 3: Request feedback from patients.

In general, you can expect positive feedback from patients who experienced a positive result from their procedure. Post a sign in your waiting area saying that you value feedback and send an appointment-follow-up email, inviting patients to take a short online survey. Quote positive reviews and link to additional positive content on your practice's site. An agency can help setup your review solicitation and management system so that your practice can concentrate on what it is best at – helping patients return to health.

STEP 4: Use technology that guards against negative reviews.

Some of the newest reputation management technologies out there send surveys to your patients asking for reviews. If the reviews are negative, they're directed to your practice administrator rather than being posted directly online.



34%

of patients said the top reason they ignore online reviews is that they seem exaggerated.



Respond to reviews without violating HIPAA

Healthcare providers have to be careful in how they respond to reviews in order to maintain patient confidentiality. A few tips:

1. Respond privately

It's not advised to publicly comment on any patient information, even if the patient mentions it first.

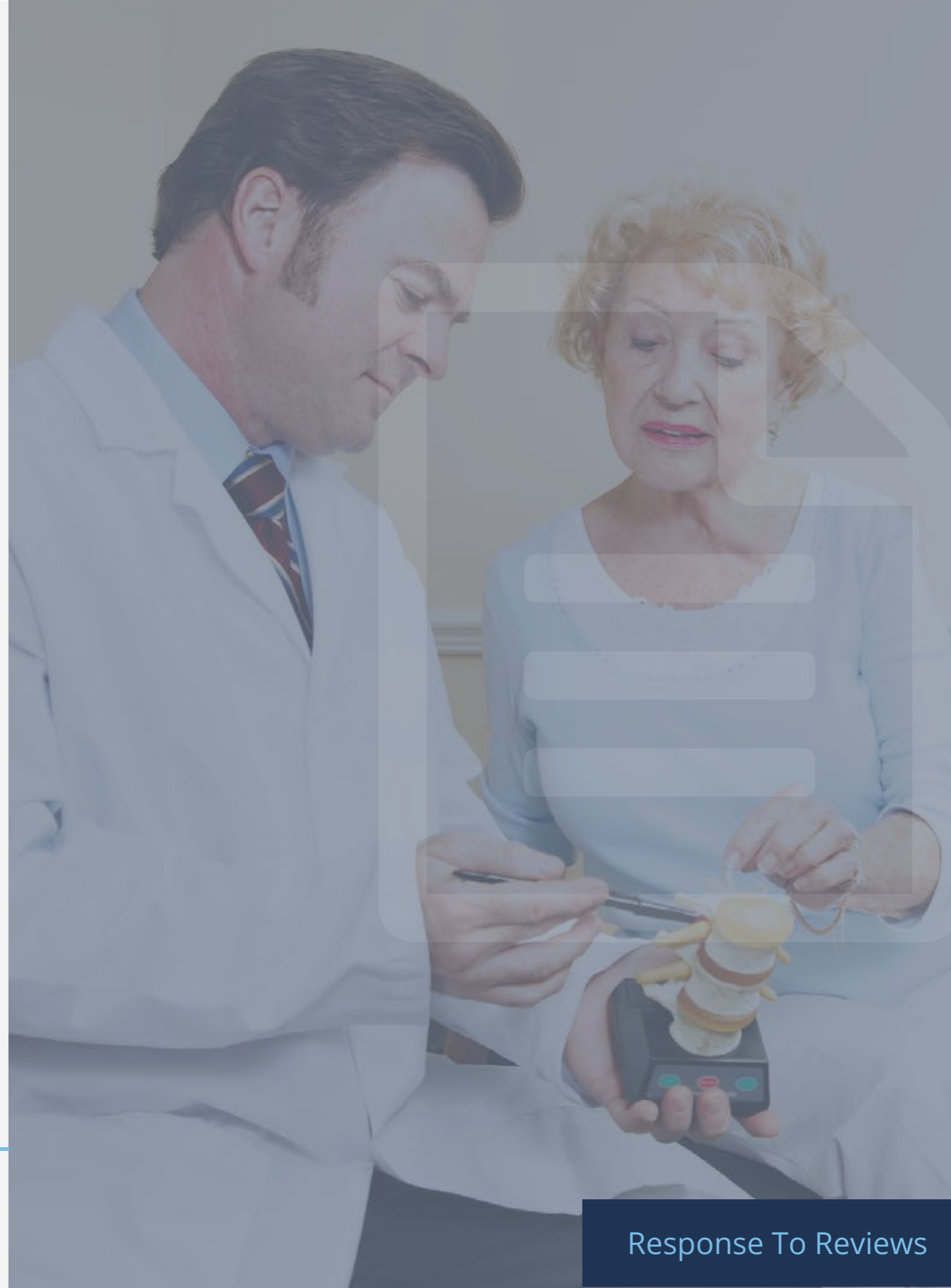
Respond to the patient privately and ask that they call the office to resolve the situation. There may be a reason you have to respond publicly. If so, do not admit that the reviewer is a patient of the organization.

2. Learn from the negativity

There is usually a grain of truth to every comment. Evaluate reviews for consistency and if there is a stream of comments similar to each other then have your practice administrator look into them. Use an automated tool to evaluate sentiment so each month you are quickly brought up to speed on what is going well and what needs improvement at your practice.

3. Never get defensive

You won't always get great reviews. Other reviewers will be looking to see how you reacted to negative commentary. It is always best to admit fault when appropriate and ask that the reviewer contact the practice personally so the issue can be resolved. Reassure your reviewers that you take the issue seriously and that you are looking into fixing the issues.





Quality online reviews will enhance your local SEO rankings and visibility

One of Google's main ranking signals is review quantity and quality. When the search engines see that your practice is receiving a great deal of positive publicity, it will reward your website with a higher trust factor, meaning your content and on-site pages will rank higher in the search results. That is only one benefit – there are others as well!

A big part of the search results page recently has been the 3 pack of Google local business reviews.

Having a higher quantity & quality of your reviews helps your business rank higher.

If you need support or elaboration on anything we discussed, feel free to reach out to us.

Cardinal – www.CardinalWebSolutions.com
or call **404-585-2096** to learn more about how to master your online reputation in 2016 and beyond.

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