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EDITORIAL COMMENT



Urologists often wonder how patients perceive a surgery they underwent. When a patient follows up in the office, however, clinical concerns and needs of the urologist and the patient often prevent an objective assessment.

In this study, the authors performed an analysis of online forum posts regarding urethroplasty and identified 553 posts from 140 individual writers. Although this is a rather small group of patients compared to the number of urethroplasties performed, even annually, it depicts the current state of information that can be accessed when querying Google for urethroplasty.

The most pressing concern voiced by patients preoperatively was difficulty navigating the healthcare system, specifically finding the appropriate reconstructive urologists, their experience with endoscopic stricture treatments, and their need for emotional support. This raises the question how often stricture patients are appropriately referred to a reconstructive urologists or if they are more heavily relying on information found on the internet to find specialty care.

The most common discussion topic postoperatively was pain. Given that the majority of patients commented within 1 month of the surgery during the healing phase, this would suggest that urologists should set expectations regarding pain more accordingly.

Overall, the vast majority of patients voiced positivity and satisfaction with their surgery. This is most encouraging considering that posts are often used to voice negative concerns and unhappiness, making the trend in positivity even more noteworthy.

In summary, while limited by a small number of patients that posted in internet forums that may not represent the urethroplasty population as a whole, it is likely patients coming for a consultation may have done their own online research beforehand and read this same body of posts. Whereas long-term outcomes such as freedom of recurrence may be most important to the urologist, this study shows that short-term issues such as postoperative pain are of most concern to the patient in the immediate and therefore should be addressed accordingly.

Matthias D. Hofer, Department of Urology, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago, IL

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