

Finding the Best Doctor

Are Old-School Ways Better? | 🔍

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In this day and age where medical information is easily accessible online, it would seem that it should be easier for patients to be able to find the best doctor for their needs.

According to ChatGPT, patients can find the best doctor for their condition in Singapore, by doing the following:

- Determine the doctor's specialty.
- Use reputable medical directories.
- Check the doctor's qualifications and experience.
- Look for patient reviews and recommendations online.
- Consider choosing a reputable hospital as such hospitals would have highly qualified specialists.
- Check for availability and consultation fees.
- Consider language and communication.
- Schedule a consultation.
- Seek a second opinion if still unsure.

The plethora of information about doctors which can be obtained from the Internet (eg, doctors' or clinic's website, online reviews and medical directory listings) are helpful for patients who are still deciding which doctor to see. Patient testimonials can be useful, though those published online may be subjective – it is possible for bias to occur as only good

reviews might be put up. Using a medical directory or Google search to find doctors of a particular specialty will definitely throw up some names; however, one will still need to exercise some judgement in deciding which doctor to choose.

How about patient referral services offered by third parties, such as insurance companies and medical concierges? Insurance companies will refer patients only to doctors on their panels, so choices may be limited. Of course, patients who wish to use their insurance coverage may have little choice but to see these panel doctors. Similarly, medical concierges will also refer patients to a limited pool of doctors who have commercial arrangements with them.

Perhaps I am old-school, but I think that the best recommendations come from personal communication. For example, a personal recommendation from a friend or relative who has had good experience with their treating doctor would be very helpful.

A recommendation from a trusted family doctor or specialist would be very useful as well. Such a doctor would be in a good position to know whether the patient should be referred to another colleague, and the doctor will likely have some insight as to which doctor to recommend. He/she would likely know the abilities and character of the doctor

who was his/her classmate, colleague or mentor, or may be comfortable with the doctor based on good feedback from past patients who had seen the doctor or on recommendations from his/her peers. From the medical grapevine and through chat group enquiries, he/she may know which doctors are good and which are not so good.

Do not get me wrong – I am not saying that the Internet is not a good source of information for patients looking for doctors; I myself find it necessary to have an Internet presence so that patients can find me online. However, I believe that recommendations from trusted sources such as friends, relatives or doctors would be even more useful. ♦

Dr Ng is a urologist in private practice and current President of the SMA. He has two teenage sons whom he hopes will grow much taller than him. He has probably collected too many watches for his own good.

