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RESEARCH REPORT

The case for clinician websites

What 2,000 UK adults want to find when they look up a private doctor online, and why the doctor's own website matters.

EVIDENCE LED PATIENT FOCUSED LONG TERM DIGITAL FIRST

Patients are already looking up their doctor online. A clinician has to decide whether what they find was written by them, or about them. ”

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INTRODUCTION

Clinician websites are essential for earning a patient's trust

Eight in ten people would look up a private doctor or specialist online before seeing them. The doctor's own website is the one result in that search the doctor controls.

Bridgehead commissioned research into how the public finds, judges and chooses private doctors and specialists online, from consultants and surgeons to private GPs.

The results show that patients research first and decide second. 80% said they would search for information about a private doctor before seeing them, and 77% of those searchers would click through to the doctor's own website.

They also show a gap. Patients visit a doctor's own website but trust it less than a hospital page or a review site. 57% say a doctor's credentials are hard to verify online, and 67% think third-party information about doctors may be incomplete or misleading.

This report sets out what patients want to find, the tone that earns their trust and the things that put them off. It gives clinicians an evidence-led basis for deciding what their own website should say.

Bridgehead believes a clear, verifiable personal website will become standard for consultants in private practice.

Methodology

Bridgehead commissioned OnePoll to survey 2,000 UK adults, nationally representative by age, gender and region. The survey ran online from 27 to 29 May 2026.

32% had used private medical care and a further 43% would consider it. Questions 2 and 3 went only to the 1,602 people likely to search online; every other figure is based on the full sample.

What are clinician websites?

A clinician website is a site the doctor or specialist controls. It sets out who they are, what they treat and how patients can see them.

Most consultants in private practice already appear online in several places. A hospital group lists them in its directory. Review platforms collect patient ratings. The medical register confirms their licence to practise. A newspaper may have quoted them.

None of these pages belongs to the clinician. The hospital decides how much space a profile gets and when it is updated. A review site shows whatever patients choose to post. The register confirms a licence but says nothing about experience or approach.

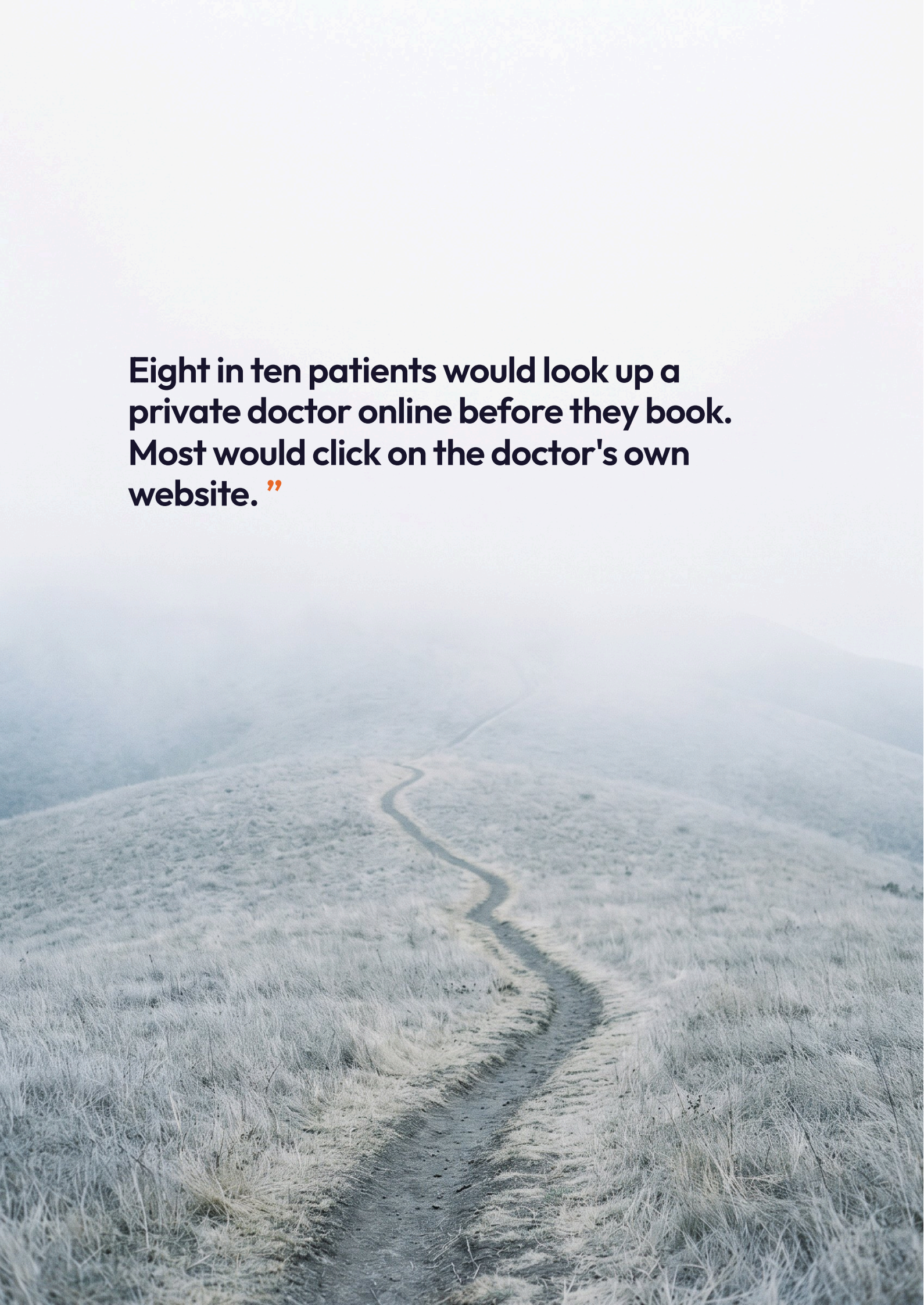
A clinician website brings the facts together in one place, written and kept current by the clinician. It sits alongside the hospital profile rather than replacing it.

Most consultants still do not have one. Many see a personal website as advertising, and some doubt that patients would trust it. The research tests both assumptions.

People are already searching for their doctor by name. They will find either information the clinician has published or information written by someone else.

A clinician's reputation online will be written, with or without their input. ”

Eight in ten patients would look up a private doctor online before they book. Most would click on the doctor's own website. ”



Clinician websites come in different shapes & sizes

THE HEADLINE FINDING

51% of people would be more likely to trust a doctor or specialist who had a personal website.

Just 2.6% said a personal website would make them less likely to trust a doctor. Asked about a site outlining qualifications and experience; all respondents, n=2,000.

Clinician websites take several forms. Some belong to one consultant; others present a group practice or a clinic run by a specialist.

However they are badged, three forms cover most of the sites patients will meet.

The forms overlap. A consultant may have a personal site and a profile on a group practice site, and run a clinic with its own website. Patients who find two of these will compare them, so the facts on each need to match.

In this report a 'clinician website' means any site the clinician controls that carries information about them, whatever it is called.

Three common forms of clinician website

Personal practice website

A site in the consultant's own name. It sets out qualifications, specialist interests, the hospitals where they practise and how to book. It is the nearest thing to a full, current CV for patients.

Group practice website

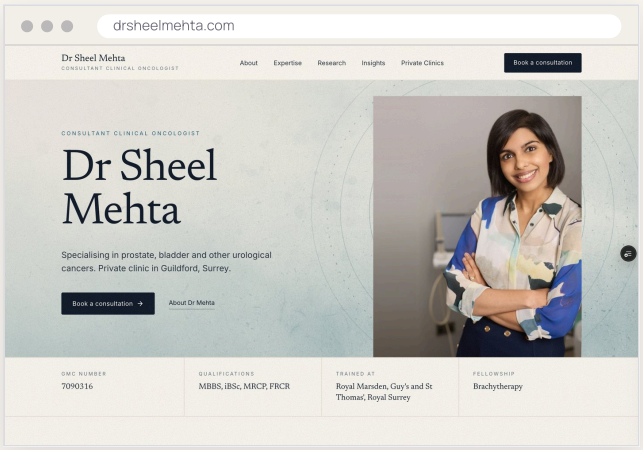
A shared site for consultants in one specialty, with a profile page for each. Patients can compare colleagues, and the group can share booking and secretarial details.

Clinic website

The site for a clinic a specialist runs, usually built around a set of treatments. The clinician's biography may sit on an 'About' or 'Our team' page rather than the home page.

What clinician websites look like

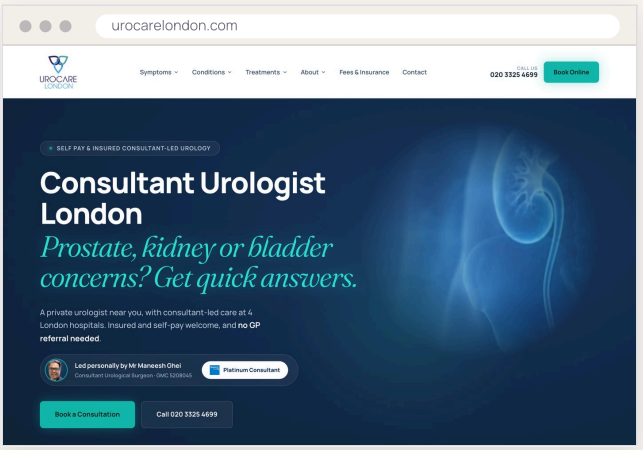
Four kinds of page a patient may find when they search for a consultant by name. The first three are built around the clinician; the fourth is a hospital's page about them.



Personal practice website

drsheelmehta.com

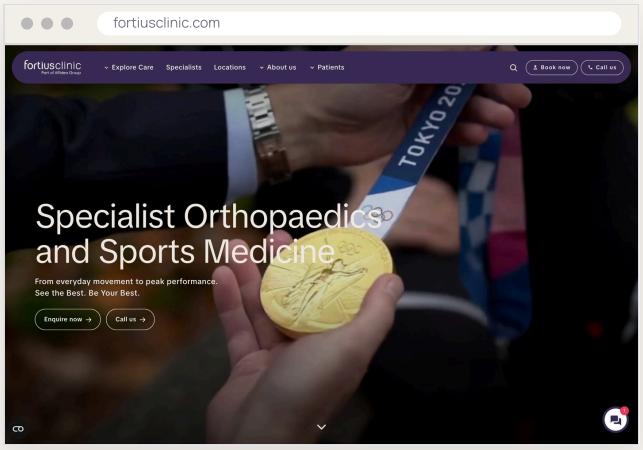
Dr Sheel Mehta, consultant clinical oncologist. Her GMC number, qualifications and training sit on the first screen. Built by Bridgehead.



Clinic website

urocarelondon.com

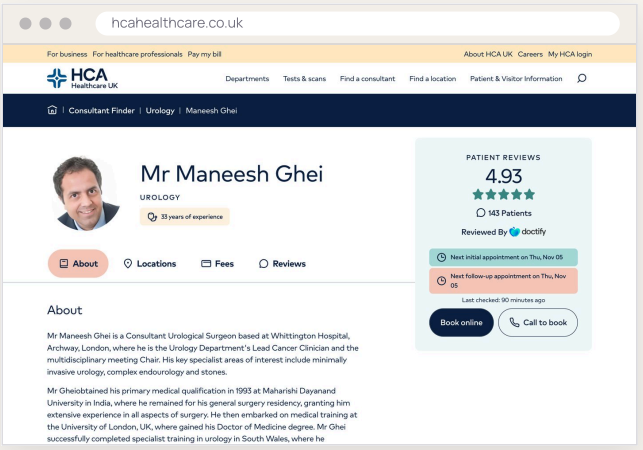
A urology clinic led by Mr Maneesh Ghei. His name, title and GMC number appear beside the booking button.



Group practice website

fortiusclinic.com

Orthopaedic and sports medicine consultants on one site, with a profile page for each specialist.



Hospital profile

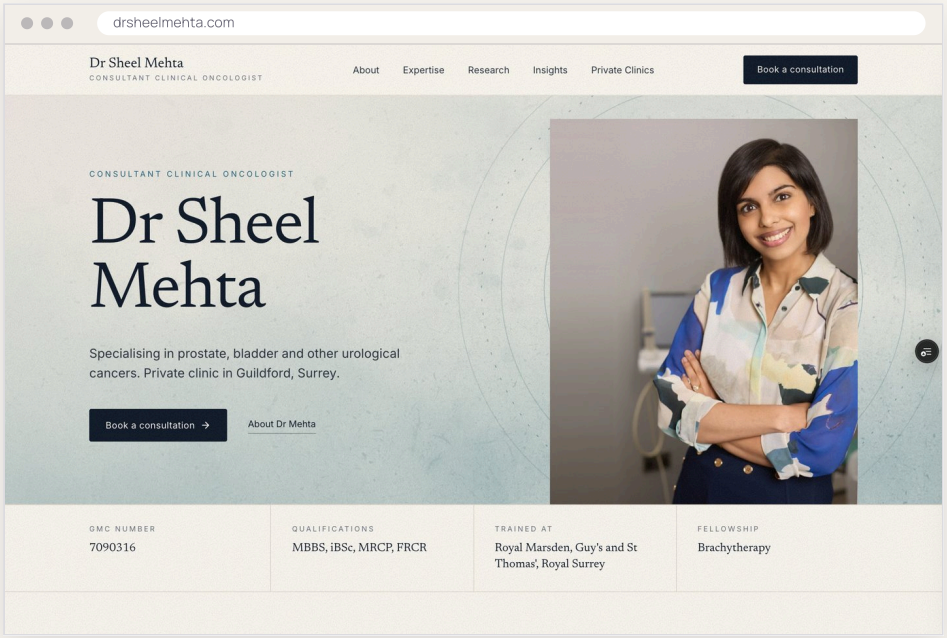
hcahealthcare.co.uk

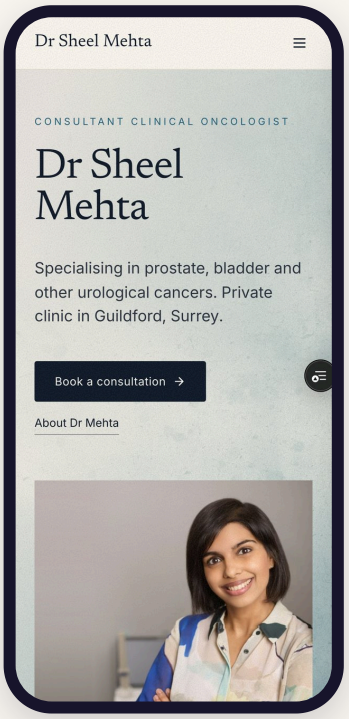
Mr Ghei's profile on HCA Healthcare UK's site, beside his own clinic's. HCA, not the consultant, decides what it says and when it changes.

Home pages captured 3 November 2026, cookie notices declined. Dr Mehta's site is shown on its pre-launch address.

Anatomy of a personal website

Bridgehead built drsheelmehta.com around what the research says patients look for first.





1 **Credentials on the first screen**

GMC number, qualifications and where she trained, in a strip below the photograph.

63% of people want qualifications and training on a doctor's website, more than any other item.

2 **The specialism in the first line**

Prostate, bladder and other urological cancers, and where she sees private patients.

47% want to see the clinician's areas of specialism.

3 **A route to book on every page**

A 'Book a consultation' button in the header and the opening panel.

47% would contact or book directly through a doctor's website.

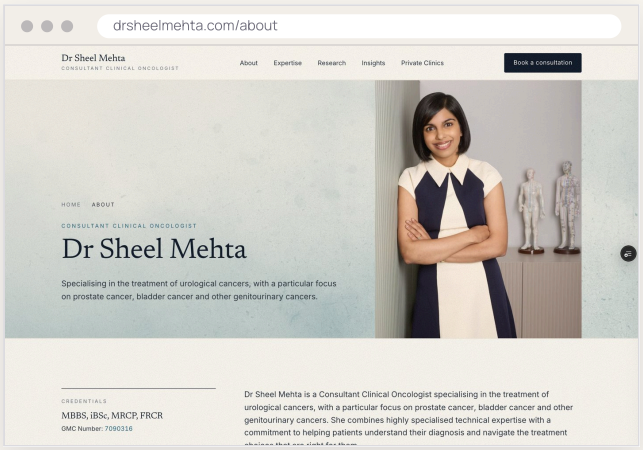
4 **A clear, professional voice**

Third-person copy built around training and experience, with no sales language.

32% say a clear, professional style would make them trust a doctor more.

Beyond the home page

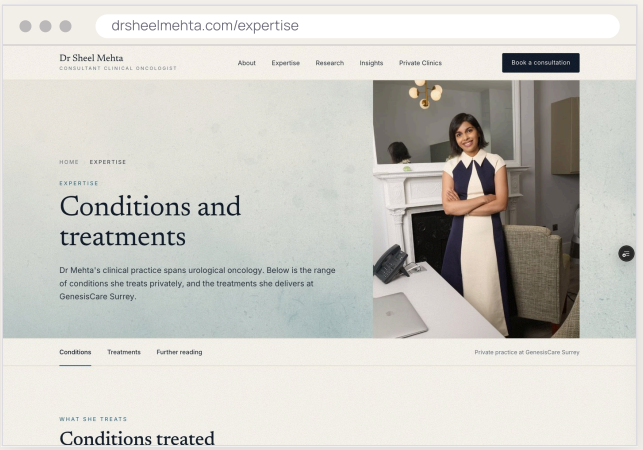
Each page of drsheelmehta.com answers one of the questions patients bring. Together they leave little for a patient to find elsewhere.



About

Qualifications first, with her GMC number linked straight to the medical register so a patient can check it.

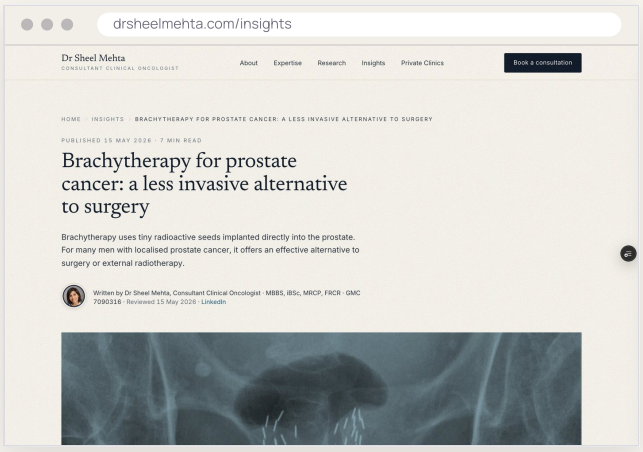
57% say a doctor's credentials are hard to verify online.



Conditions and treatments

What she treats privately and the treatments she delivers, with the hospital where she sees patients.

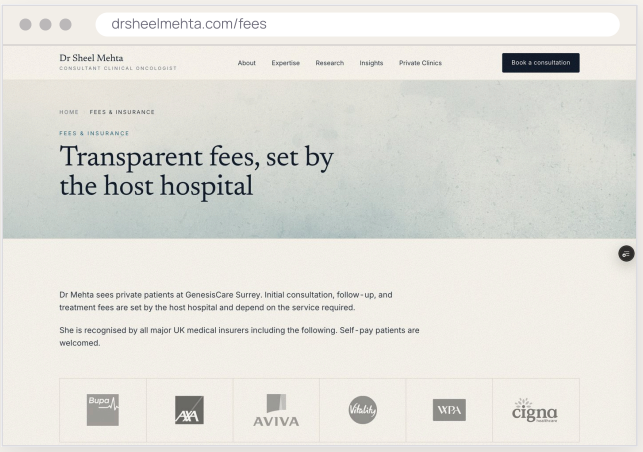
47% want a clinician's areas of specialism.



Patient information

Each article names its author, her qualifications and GMC number, and the date it was last reviewed.

26% worry about outdated information about a doctor.



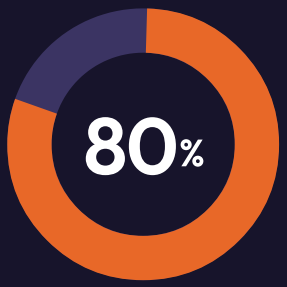
Fees and insurance

Who sets the fees, which insurers recognise her and that self-paying patients are welcome.

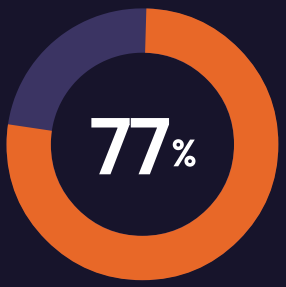
31% worry about a lack of information.

Clinician websites attract patients' attention

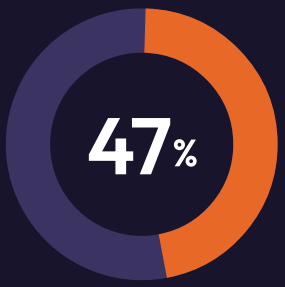
Patients who search for a private doctor click through to the doctor's own site.



would search online before seeing a private doctor or specialist



of those searchers would click on the doctor's own website



would contact or book directly through a doctor's website

Hospital and clinic sites draw the most clicks. 92% of searchers would visit one. A doctor's own website comes second on 77%, ahead of review sites such as Doctify and Google reviews on 73%.

Media coverage and LinkedIn each draw fewer than six in ten searchers. A newspaper quote or a professional profile does not do the job of a personal website.

Patients go to the doctor's own site for facts the other channels do not carry.

Likely to click each source when researching a private doctor (searchers, n=1,602)



Why do clinicians shy away from websites?

Many consultants assume a hospital profile is enough, or that a personal site will look like self-promotion.

Doctors are cautious about publicity, and for good reason. The GMC expects any information doctors publish about their services to be factual and verifiable, and a personal website can feel like advertising by another name.

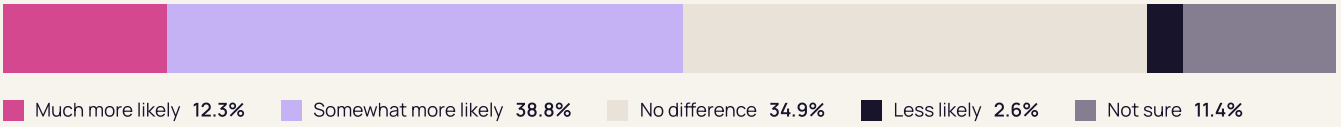
Others assume patients will rely on the hospital's directory, or will distrust anything a doctor writes about themselves.

This caution is understandable, but the research does not support it.

51% of people said a personal website setting out a doctor's qualifications and experience would make them more likely to trust that doctor. 35% said it would make no difference. Only 2.6% said it would make them less likely to trust the doctor.

The risk lies in how a site is written. 22% of people named an overly promotional tone as one of their biggest concerns when researching a doctor. A factual site avoids that; a sales page invites it.

'If a doctor or specialist had a personal website, how would it affect your trust in them?' (n=2,000)



Closing the trust gap

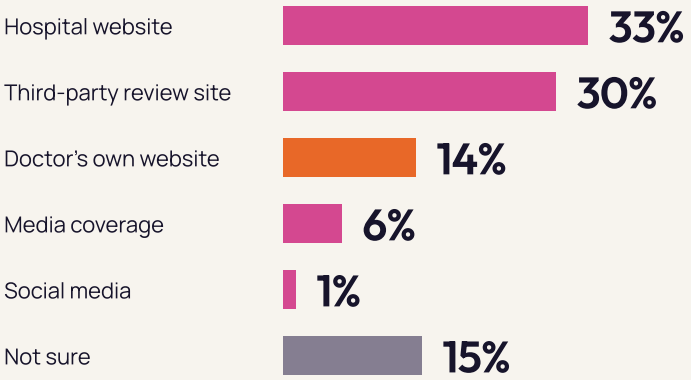
Patients visit a doctor's own website, but they trust other sources more.

Asked which single source they would trust most, searchers put the hospital website first (33%) and review sites second (30%). The doctor's own website came third on 14%, although it is the second most visited.

The reason shows in the next set of answers. 57% agree that a doctor's credentials are hard to verify online. Patients go to the doctor's site for facts but have nothing to check them against.

Yet patients do not fully trust the alternatives either. 67% agree that third-party information about doctors may be incomplete or misleading, and 64% trust information more when it comes directly from the doctor.

'Which source would you trust most when researching a doctor or specialist online?' (searchers, n=1,602)



67% agree third-party information about doctors may be incomplete or misleading

64% trust information more when it comes directly from the doctor

57% agree it is difficult to verify a doctor's credentials online

48% would feel more confident choosing a doctor with an online profile

A clinician website closes this gap when patients can check every claim on it: the registration number, the hospitals where the clinician holds practising privileges and links to the official registers.

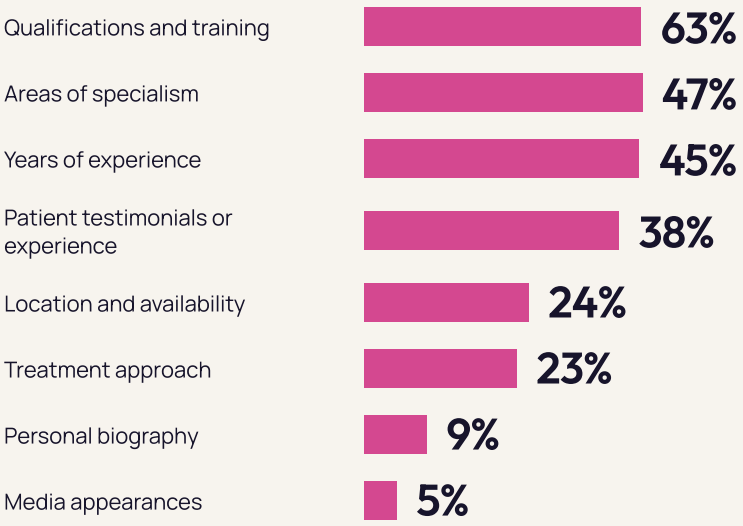
Start with the credentials...

Patients want proof of competence before anything else.

Asked to choose up to three things they would most want to see on a doctor's website, 63% picked qualifications and training. Areas of specialism (47%) and years of experience (45%) came next.

These three are the basis of every good clinician website. Patient experience follows on 38%, well ahead of a personal biography (9%) or media appearances (5%).

'Which information would you most want to see on a doctor or specialist's website?' Up to three choices (n=2,000)



It helps to think of the five questions every patient brings to a clinician's website.

Trained	Where did the clinician train, and what qualifications do they hold?
Treats	Which conditions and procedures do they specialise in?
Experience	How long have they practised in this field?
Patients	What do other patients say about seeing them?
Where & when	Where do they practise, and how soon can I be seen?

A clinician website should be judged by how quickly and clearly it answers them.

Adding depth to the clinician's profile

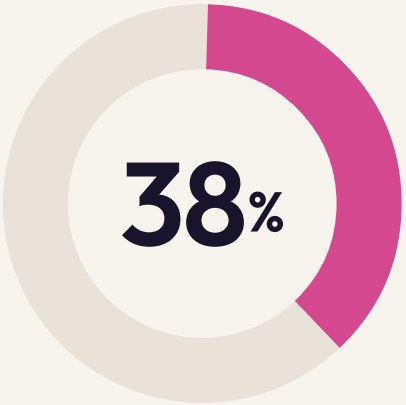
After the credentials, patients want to know what seeing this doctor will be like.

38% of people want to read about other patients' experience. That is more than want to know where and when the clinician practises (24%) or how they approach treatment (23%).

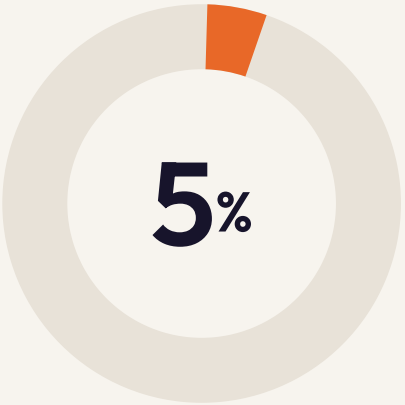
Patient experience links a list of qualifications to a decision to book. Testimonials have to follow the rules on how doctors advertise and respect patient confidentiality, and the clinician remains responsible for what the site says.

Media appearances came last of all. Just 5% of people want to see them on a doctor's website, and 9% want a personal biography.

Many consultants lead with their press coverage and their life story. Patients put both at the bottom of the list. They can support a site, but they should not lead it.



want patient testimonials or experience on a doctor's website



want media appearances on a doctor's website

Different patients want different things

The patients most likely to pay for private care are the most receptive to a clinician website.

People who have already paid for private care respond most strongly. 66% of them would trust a doctor more if the doctor had a personal website, and 63% would book directly through one. Among people who would not consider private care, those figures fall to 27% and 16%.

Age matters too. 68% of 18 to 34 year olds would trust a doctor more with a personal website, against 36% of those aged 55 and over. Older patients still want the same core content: 69% of over-55s want qualifications and training, the highest of any age group.

A clinician's site does not need to win over everyone. It needs to work for the patients already looking to book.

	Have used private care	Would consider it	Would not consider it
More likely to trust a doctor with a personal website	66%	54%	27%
Would choose the doctor with a website, all else equal	44%	33%	19%
Likely to contact or book through a doctor's website	63%	52%	16%

	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 and over
More likely to trust a doctor with a personal website	68%	55%	36%
Want qualifications and training on the site	53%	63%	69%

Bases: used private care 641; would consider 863; would not consider 345; 18 to 34 549; 35 to 54 653; 55 and over 798.


Write every
claim so a
patient can
check it.”

The importance of tone of voice

Patients trust a clear, professional voice above a warm or an academic one.

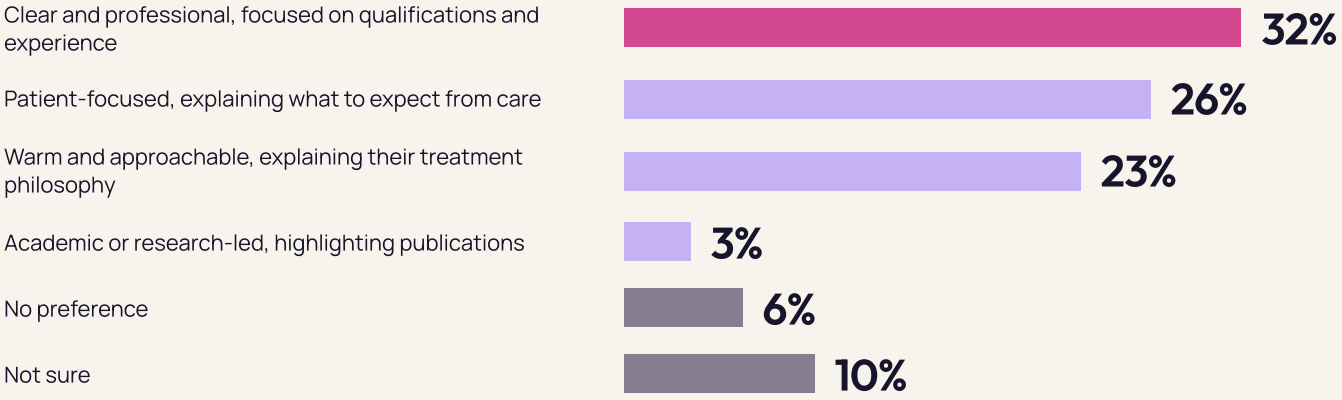
We asked which personal style would make people trust a doctor more. A clear, professional style focused on qualifications and experience came first on 32%. A patient-focused style that explains what to expect from care came second on 26%, and a warm, approachable style third on 23%.

Among people who have used private care, the clear and professional style leads by a wider margin: 42%, against 25% for patient-focused and 23% for warm.

The academic, research-led style came last on 3%. A list of publications may impress colleagues, but it does little for patients.

None of this rules out warmth. The patient-focused and warm styles together outscore the professional one. But the opening of a clinician's site should establish competence, and the warmer material should follow it.

'Which personal style would make you trust a doctor or specialist more?' (n=2,000)



Write in a clear, professional style to earn a patient's trust. ”

What worries patients

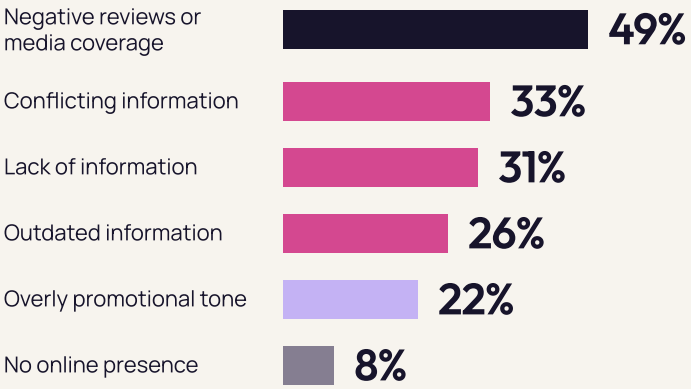
Patients worry most about bad reviews, and next about information that is missing, contradictory or out of date.

Nearly half of people (49%) named negative reviews or media coverage among their biggest concerns. A website cannot delete a bad review. It can make sure a bad review is not the only thing a patient reads.

The next three concerns are ones a clinician can fix directly. 33% worry about conflicting information, 31% about a lack of information and 26% about outdated information. A single, current source that the clinician maintains answers all three.

Only 8% would be concerned by a doctor having no online presence at all. Patients do not mark a doctor down for having no website. They mark the doctor down for what they find instead.

'Which, if any, of the following would concern you most when researching a doctor?' Up to two choices (n=2,000)



Purple bars: concerns a clinician website addresses directly.

Patients do not mark a doctor down for having no website. They mark the doctor down for what they find instead. ”

A website is the tiebreaker

When two doctors look equally qualified, a personal website tips the choice.

33%

would choose the doctor **with** a personal website

7.5%

would choose the doctor **without** one

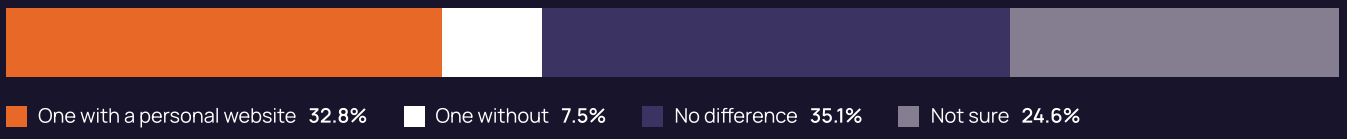
We asked people to imagine two doctors or specialists with similar qualifications. A third (33%) would choose the one with a personal website. Just 7.5% would choose the one without. Among people with a preference, that is more than four to one.

35% said it would make no difference and a quarter were unsure. A website will not decide every case, but in a close call it works for the clinician far more often than against.

The margin widens among the patients who matter most to private practice. 44% of people who have used private care would choose the doctor with a website, against 7% who would choose the one without.

A website also shortens the route to an appointment. 47% of people would be likely to contact or book directly through a doctor's website. Among past private patients the figure is 63%.

'If two doctors or specialists had similar qualifications, which would you choose?' (n=2,000)



What a clinician website costs

A professionally built site costs a few thousand pounds, plus a monthly fee to keep it running. Keeping it accurate is the larger commitment.

Typical UK prices, 2026

Website builder (e.g. Wix, Squarespace), set up by the clinician	£10 to £50 a month	Whito
Freelance designer, five-page site	£1,500 to £3,000	Whito
Agency, five-page site	£3,000 to £5,000	Whito
London agency	From £8,000	ExpertSure
Hosting, security, maintenance and updates	£50 to £300 a month	ExpertSure

Sources: Whito, How much does a website cost in the UK? (2026); ExpertSure, How much does a website cost UK 2026? (prices verified October 2026). Both are web design businesses; treat the ranges as indicative.

A website builder is the cheapest route, but the clinician then writes, designs and maintains the site alone. A freelancer or agency takes on the build; the clinician still has to approve every claim on it.

The build is the smaller cost over the life of a site. The larger one is keeping it right. 33% of people worry about conflicting information and 26% about outdated information when they research a doctor, so a site that falls behind the clinician's practice works against them.

What Bridgehead charges

For a site Bridgehead has built. Annual billing takes two months off either plan.

Hosting, security and maintenance

£99 a month + VAT

Domain and security certificate renewal, managed hosting, backups, security updates and uptime monitoring.

Care and content

£345 a month + VAT

Everything above, plus changes made on request within two working days: new articles, updates to experience and hospitals, photographs and takedowns.

Design and development

£100 an hour + VAT

New pages, redesigns and new features, scoped and quoted before work starts.

Bespoke is better

Every clinician's practice is different. The right website depends on the specialty, the patients and how they come to book.

A surgeon who sees most patients on referral from a GP needs a site that confirms credentials and hospital privileges. A dermatologist whose patients refer themselves needs clear treatment information and an easy route to book. A consultant who also runs a clinic may need a personal page and a clinic site, with the same facts on both.

The research points to a common core: credentials first, written in a clear and professional voice, kept current and linked to sources patients can check. What sits around that core should follow the clinician's practice.

A surgeon with an established referral base may want a short, factual site that draws little attention. A consultant building a self-pay practice may want more depth on treatments and patient experience. Neither is wrong; each suits a different practice.

The right website for one clinician will not be the right website for another.”

To discuss our findings contact:

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The results

OnePoll surveyed 2,000 UK adults for Bridgehead, online, from 27 to 29 May 2026. The questions and full results are set out below. Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

Q1. If you were considering seeing a private doctor or specialist (e.g. consultant, surgeon, private GP), how likely would you be to search for information about them online?

All respondents (n=2,000)

	Very likely	Fairly likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Fairly unlikely	Very unlikely	Not sure
Search online	51.0%	29.1%	9.8%	2.5%	2.9%	4.8%

Q2. When researching a private doctor or specialist online, how likely are you to click on each of the following sources?

Respondents very or fairly likely to search online (n=1,602)

	Very likely	Fairly likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Fairly unlikely	Very unlikely	Not sure
Doctor's own personal website	39.6%	37.5%	12.1%	4.9%	2.1%	3.9%
Clinic or hospital website	61.3%	30.8%	5.3%	0.7%	0.4%	1.5%
Third-party review site (e.g. Doctify, Google reviews)	35.3%	37.5%	14.3%	5.6%	3.3%	4.1%
Media article or interview	23.9%	32.9%	22.2%	9.4%	6.1%	5.4%
Professional profile (e.g. LinkedIn)	29.2%	29.7%	16.8%	11.2%	9.3%	3.9%

Q3. Which source would you trust most when researching a doctor or specialist online?

Respondents very or fairly likely to search online (n=1,602)

Hospital website	33.2%
Third-party review site	29.7%
Not sure	15.1%
Doctor's own website	14.4%
Media coverage	6.4%
Social media	1.3%

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about doctors or specialists?

All respondents (n=2,000)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
I trust information more when it comes directly from the doctor (e.g. in person)	26.8%	36.9%	25.6%	5.0%	1.2%	4.5%
It is difficult to verify a doctor's credentials online	18.6%	38.1%	21.4%	7.9%	2.4%	11.8%
I would feel more confident choosing a doctor with an online profile	15.3%	32.6%	34.6%	6.7%	3.0%	7.8%
Third-party information may be incomplete or misleading	22.6%	44.5%	22.6%	3.8%	1.2%	5.3%

Q5. If a doctor or specialist had a personal website (e.g. outlining qualifications and experience), how would it affect your trust in them?

All respondents (n=2,000)

Much more likely to trust	12.3%
Somewhat more likely to trust	38.8%
No difference	34.9%
Somewhat less likely to trust	1.8%
Much less likely to trust	0.8%
Not sure	11.4%

Q6. Which information would you most want to see on a doctor or specialist's website? Select up to three options.

All respondents (n=2,000)

Qualifications and training	63.0%
Areas of specialism	47.4%
Years of experience	45.5%
Patient testimonials or experience	37.8%
Location and availability	24.4%
Treatment approach	22.6%
Personal biography	9.3%
Not sure	7.7%
Media appearances	4.8%
None of the above	1.5%

Q7. Which personal style would make you trust a doctor or specialist more? Select best match.

All respondents (n=2,000)

Clear and professional, focused on qualifications and experience	31.9%
Patient-focused, explaining what to expect from care	26.4%
Warm and approachable, explaining their treatment philosophy	22.9%
Not sure	9.6%
No preference	6.0%
Academic or research-led, highlighting publications and expertise	3.3%

Q8. Which, if any, of the following would concern you most when researching a doctor? Select up to two options.

All respondents (n=2,000)

Negative reviews or media coverage	48.6%
Conflicting information	33.1%
Lack of information	31.0%
Outdated information	26.3%
Overly promotional tone	21.6%
No online presence	8.0%
Not sure	6.7%
None of the above	2.0%

Q9. If two doctors or specialists had similar qualifications, which of the below would you choose?

All respondents (n=2,000)

No difference	35.1%
One with a personal website	32.8%
Not sure	24.6%
One without a personal website	7.5%

Q10. How likely would you be to contact or book an appointment directly through a doctor or specialist's website?

All respondents (n=2,000)

	Very likely	Fairly likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Fairly unlikely	Very unlikely	Not sure
Contact or book directly	15.2%	31.6%	21.9%	8.2%	8.0%	15.1%

Have you ever used, or would you consider using, private medical care?

All respondents (n=2,000)

Yes, I would consider it	43.1%
Yes, I have used private medical care	32.0%
No, I would not consider it	17.2%
Not sure	7.5%

Age

All respondents (n=2,000)

18 to 24	10.1%
25 to 34	17.4%
35 to 44	17.1%
45 to 54	15.6%
55 to 64	16.4%
65 and over	23.4%

Where do you live?

All respondents (n=2,000)

South East	13.9%
London	13.2%
North West	11.2%
East of England	9.5%
South West	8.8%
West Midlands	8.6%
Yorkshire and the Humber	8.3%
Scotland	8.2%
East Midlands	7.3%
Wales	4.7%
North East	4.0%
Northern Ireland	2.2%

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About Bridgehead

Bridgehead is a specialist communications and public affairs agency. We help individuals, families and organisations manage their reputation, tell their story and take control of how they are seen.

Our mission is to help our clients understand the power of reputation and use it to their advantage.

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