Online reviews: Does Google really forget?

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UK

How is your relationship with Google; do you love or hate it? Does it display negative information about your dental practice? With right to be forgotten legislation, relief from career-damaging reviews now seems to be at hand, but does Google really forget?

In May, the EU Court of Justice found in favour of a Spanish citizen who sued Google for listing information about him that he asserted was no longer relevant. He alleged that this information was prejudicial to his selling a property. Fortunately for him, the court approved his appeal, contributing substantially to the right to be forgotten being drafted into European law.

For Google, this ruling opened the floodgate for requests for thousands of links to be removed from its search engine results page from residents in the EU. By July, it was estimated that the company had already received at least 70,000 such requests. Many applicants have made use of lawyers or search engine optimisation professionals, creating a niche for companies, which are charging the price of an implant per month to manage their clients’ online reputation on Google.

The company’s hands are tied in this matter. Regardless of its algorithms’ preference in ranking news and media sites, they have to follow this ruling. Recent threats of financial penalties in various European countries have softened Google’s resolve further, and there is a similar ongoing case in Japan. Is it possibly the end of the line?

For some dentists, this could be the long-awaited answer to their prayers. In an era in which online competition is omnipresent, to the patient’s critical eyes, negative reviews can be very damaging to a business. In the past, a lifelong career could be destroyed by unsubstantiated hearsay online.

A seasoned professional’s one error would previously always have been visible on Google, possibly damaging that person’s confidence, career and standing. I have numerous conversations about negative Facebook/Yell/Google reviews on a weekly basis here at Dental Focus and receive a large volume of phone calls about how to be removed from Google for bad press.

What about data on dentists who have been investigated by the General Dental Council and cleared? Is not making this data available fair to them or do patients deserve to know the full story regardless of how much the dentist has invested in developing or redeeming himself or herself? If you were

Negative online reviews can significantly damage someone's career in dentistry.
In the first week of Google making available a means for search removal requests, 22 per cent (the greatest number by nation) of all applications came from the UK. 

Unfortunately, the company has also had numerous cases of fraudulent removal requests from impersonators trying to harm the competition. It seems that there is always good and bad practice, whatever the medium.

In order to manage this, Google states: “We will assess each individual request and attempt to balance the privacy rights of the individual with the public's right to know and distribute information. When evaluating your request, we will look at whether the results include outdated information about you, as well as whether there’s a public interest in the information—for example, information about financial scams, professional malpractice, criminal convictions, or public conduct of government officials.”

Will you be safe once a link has been removed from Google? There are sites such as hiddenfromgoogle.com that openly display all hidden results. Even if a result has been hidden, the bottom of the results page on Google states that some results have been removed. At times, it even provides a link to hiddenfromgoogle.com.

It appears that, even if something has been deleted, Google still knows everything about you. Everything on the Internet is recorded forever (your party antics, hangovers and selfies), and where one stops tracking, another will take over.

If a patient really wanted to dig up some dirt, with a limited bit of knowledge, he or she still could do so.

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Naz Haque, aka the Scientist, is Operations Manager at Dental Focus. He has a background in mobile and network computing, and has experience supporting a wide range of blue-chip brands, from Apple to Xerox. As an expert in search engine optimisation, Naz is passionate about helping clients develop strategies to enhance their brand and increase the return on investment from their dental practice websites.

Contact Info

The 36th Australian Dental Congress
Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre - an AEG EARTH venue
Wednesday 25th to Sunday 29th March 2015

Invitation from the Congress Chairman

On behalf of the Local Organising Committee of the 36th Australian Dental Congress, it is with great pleasure that I invite you to attend Congress and enjoy the river city of Brisbane.

Over three and a half days, highly acclaimed International and Australian speakers supported by contemporary research, will present a wide range of subjects relevant to practice. These presentations will be complemented by hands-on workshops, Lunch and Learn sessions, specific programs for members of the dental team.

Social activities will be available for relaxation purposes.

The Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre is adjacent to the Southbank Precinct on the banks of the Brisbane River. Nearby is the Queensland Performing Arts Complex, the Queensland Museum and the Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art. A comprehensive industry exhibition will be held alongside the Congress enabling delegates access between scientific sessions to view the latest in equipment and materials.

Come and join us for the scientific programme, the opportunity to meet colleagues and the experience Brisbane has to offer.

Dr David H Thomson
Congress Chairman
36th Australian Dental Congress

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