

Member case study

# Virtual virtues

## How two patient-focused practice Web sites net solid results

### Patricia Brown's take

Our Web site ([www.smamd.com](http://www.smamd.com)) is our window to the world. It's changed our position in the marketplace and enhanced our work flow. Patients searching the Internet for a doctor can find us. It's something that the group — with 16 physicians and two locations — needed to do.

Working with an experienced physician-practice Web site provider, we launched the site in 2004. Start-up cost was around \$8,000. Our Web site gives patients all pertinent information — from the insurance we accept to flu shot updates. Patients can download forms to preregister or update their e-mail and address information. Data accuracy increases when patients enter it themselves.

Online bill-paying boosts our revenue cycle and reduces time and costs involved with mailings. We can set up payment plans online and automatically charge patients' credit cards each month. I'll save about \$3,000 a year doing appointment reminders by e-mail instead of by phone.

We can go into the site and make changes. What we started four years ago is only going to accelerate. We just redesigned the graphics at a cost of about \$700. Eventually, we'll use the appointment request, appointment reminder, lab results and prescription renewal features (the latter is huge — we get about 500 requests a week for prescription refills).

I'd like to put a kiosk in the waiting room so patients can check themselves in. I'd like to add virtual office visits so that the Web site uses pop-up questions to prompt patients to describe their ailments. The doctor reviews that information and decides how to follow up. Transferring patient medical records is something else I'd like to add.

The Web site saves time and increases efficiency. We can cut staffing and still see at least one additional patient each day. Multiply that one patient by all the physicians in our practice and that's where our revenue increases.

Connectivity is the way of the future. If you haven't started, you're already behind.

### Larry Shackelford's turn

Because patients today rely heavily on the convenience of the Internet to find doctors and medical information, a presence on the Web is essential for a medical group like ours, with more than 80 physicians and 15

By Patricia Brown and J. Larry Shackelford, CPA, FACMPE



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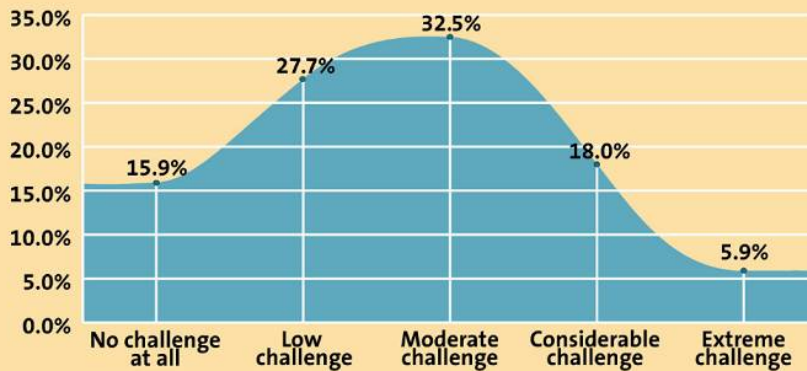
— Patricia Brown

Our Web site cuts costs by streamlining staffing, scheduling and patient communications.

— J. Larry Shackelford, CPA, FACMPE

## What you had to say

Designing and implementing a Web site for my practice is ...



Source: MGMA 2008 "Medical practice today: What members have to say" research.

clinic locations. Patients can find us (www.mana.md) on popular search engines by typing in "physician" or the specialty and the city or region. Our IT and marketing departments develop and maintain our site in-house, which allows us to make updates almost instantly and controls costs.

We picked a domain name that'd easy to remember — www.mana.md — and coupled a simple, clear design with easy-to-understand content. In developing mana.md, we keep patient needs at the forefront. We asked ourselves: What do they need to know? How will they use the site? What services will be most beneficial?

Online appointment requests and prescription refills are huge assets. Calls for appointments bombarded our clinics at certain times every day. Patients complained of long hold times and busy signals. We couldn't balance the need for staffing at these hectic times with staffing during slower times. Online appointment schedul-

## The difference between working with other medical suppliers...



We believe in getting you what you need when you need it.

ing was the answer. Now, patients schedule appointments 24/7. They select the time and date and choose whether to receive confirmation from our office by either phone or e-mail. A staff member checks online appointments before the office opens each day.

Patients can request prescription refills online 24/7. Requests go through our electronic medical records system and then to

**We can do more point-of-service work when patients are in the office. Our revenue increased because we've become more efficient.**

the pharmacy. Patient forms are available online, so patients can download and print them; they don't have to arrive 30 minutes early to complete forms. We plan to add patient education, patient surveys, procedure information and an online payment option.

Our Web site cuts costs by streamlining staffing, scheduling and patient communications. We can do more point-of-service work when patients are in the office. Our revenue increased because we've become more efficient.

We've taken customer service to a higher level. And happy patients mean a higher retention rate. Practice Web sites aren't a fad — they're the way patients want to do business. ☕

**((listen))**

At [mgma.com/medpracticetoday](http://mgma.com/medpracticetoday), listen to J. Larry Shackelford explain how his practice's Web site helped increase revenue

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- From the home page, search for "Web site"
- From the *Practice Management* tab, choose "Vendors and services" and then "AdminiServe partners" to find a company that develops medical practice Web sites
- From the *MGMA Store*, enter 6709 in the *Search Products* box for the book *A+ Marketing: Proven Tactics for Success*

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