New Medem service targets AAP chapters

by Lori O'Keefe Correspondent

A new Web site service will enable chapters to keep members updated on state-level activities, including events and advocacy efforts, and provide educational materials. This is the latest service offered by Medem following the recent launches of "Your Practice Online," a physician Web site service, and secure messaging, both designed to enhance physician relationships with patients.

"Our chapter is working on child health care financing, so it will be nice to update members on the status of those efforts," said David Reynolds, M.D., FAAP, president of the AAP Alabama Chapter, which expects to evaluate Web site provider options. "Also, vaccine issues change every other day, if not every day, so a Web site would give us an opportunity to disseminate information in a fast, consistent way."

According to Carl Eisenberg, M.D., FAAP, AAP Wisconsin Chapter vice president, the Chapter has had a Web site in development with another provider but has decided to switch to Medem's service because of accessibility to AAP information.

Medem, the Internet initiative of the Academy and other medical societies, announced its new service at the Annual Chapter Forum. Presenting information at the chapter executive directors meeting, at district dinners, and at its AAP services exhibit. "Medem's presentation both at Chapter Forum and at our executive committee meeting in Madison were persuasive," said Dr. Eisenberg.

Template Web site pages have been designed to accommodate 90% of chapter needs, including a home page with the chapter logo and pages for a chapter newsletter, calendar of events, resources, legislative initiatives, membership information and registration, and background on the chapter. Chapters can customize Web sites by working with Medem's member services department to build their sites, adding and removing content as desired. Medem will keep chapter Web sites on its server, enabling the member services department to maintain and update chapter sites as needed.

In addition, links to the AAP and Medem Web sites will be included on chapter sites. The link to medem.com, which includes a physician finder service, will then provide links to AAP members with Your Practice Online Web sites.

Medem also will provide chapters using the service with a domain name that will be registered with major search engines. "Our goal is for our Web site to serve a dual role just like the AAP Web site," said Jay Mitchell, M.D., FAAP, vice president of the AAP Michigan Chapter. "We plan to include information aimed at both members and advocates."

According to Dr. Mitchell, the Michigan Chapter had a Web site that wasn't meeting its needs. A decision had been made to redesign the Web site but concerns that it would be labor intensive for the chapter and expensive to hire a consultant prompted the chapter to take advantage of Medem's free service and experience.

"The fact that I don't have to learn coding or even spend the time learning it is very helpful. We can tell Medem what we want, and they create the site," said Dr. Mitchell.

"If a Web site can be helpful in making decisions about caring for children, it makes sense," Dr. Reynolds said. "We want to include information that will be helpful to members and don't want to bother them with information that isn't helpful."

In October, Medem introduced Medex, a secure messaging service that encrypts e-mail communication between a physician's office and patients, as well as "starter" Web sites created for each Academy member not already using Your Practice Online. The customized Web sites include basic information such as specialty, office location, directions, patient education materials and medical articles. Like the chapter Web sites, members can make changes to their sites, including converging an individual site into a group site.

In addition to the Academy, Medem member societies include the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons, the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, the American College of Preventive Medicine, the Michigan State Medical Society, the Mississippi State Medical Association, the Vermont Medical Society and the Maryland State Medical Society.

For more information on chapter Web sites, contact Summer Osburn in the Medem member services department at (877) 926-3336 or (877) 526-3336 outside the United States, or e-mail info@medem.com. To register for Your Practice Online, contact Medem member services at the same phone number or e-mail address as above or go to www.yourpracticeonline.com. To contact the Academy with questions about Medem, call Noreen Steward at (800) 433-9016, ext. 7944, or e-mail stewart@aap.org.