



New Web domain identifies doctors at a glance

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Citing physician demand for a medical Internet domain, MaxMD, a Jersey City, NJ-based service provider, has launched the .md domain. The new domain means doctors, hospitals, and universities can now use .md, rather than .com or .edu, to show their affiliation with the medical community.

The domain is available in the United States and more than 90 other countries. Basic registration includes the .md domain, a Web card to activate the domain, and a secure e-mail account for \$150 per year.

“The domain was officially launched last December, but MaxMD has been registering members for about two years, mainly through word of mouth,” says Seanne Murray, senior vice president of MaxMD. The domain has approximately 10,000 members, including individual physicians, practice groups, medical institutions, and universities. The company expects membership to climb to 50,000 by the end of the year.

MaxMD (www.max.md) acquired the exclusive rights to market and distribute the .md domain in 2003. The company then conducted research to determine what physicians and others in the health care community want from the Internet.

“Physicians want to have a place where they can be identified as medical experts online, much like educators identify themselves with .edu and nonprofits identify themselves with .org,” says Murray.

Some institutions are using the domain to link to their other Web sites, which use the .edu or .org domain. The Mayo Clinic, for example, uses .edu for its college of medicine and .md for its network of clinics, says Murray. “Usage of the .md domain for physicians’ practices is also on the rise because many view it as more medically authoritative than the commercial .com domain,” she says, adding that, “Anyone can have a .com.”

Along with the domain, MaxMD initiated its Online Medical Advancement Council, an advisory board composed of representatives from medicine, research, education, and industry. The board was created as a platform for discussing various issues related to health care and the Internet, such as online medical communication and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

MaxMD officials recruited the volunteer board from medical conferences and meetings. The six-member board is expected to grow to about 10 members over the next few months, says Venkat Gullapalli, MD, chief medical officer for MaxMD.

“The purpose of the council is to bring together a well-rounded group of advisors who represent all aspects of health care,” says Dr. Gullapalli. “We plan to address a core set of issues and related unmet needs ranging from continuing medical education and online privacy and collaboration to the role of the Internet in enhancing patient care. Our communications and educational outreach will encompass a range of media, such as medical journals, health care trades, the Internet, and Webinars.”

The new domain, concludes Dr. Gullapalli, “allows physicians, not just at a local or regional level, but in all aspects of health care, be it inside a hospital network or operating independently, to collaborate securely with peers and patients, learn about breaking industry advancements, share best practices for management of their patients, even collaborate on diagnostic applications. Really, this will help them harness the whole of the Internet.”