

# MM&M

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## SCIENCE OF DTC

As the industry enters a new era of "white coat" TV campaigns, Merck is researching the way consumers absorb information

### DECONGESTION IN QUESTION

Seasonality, OTC switches and lost patents define allergies class

### JUST WHAT THE PATIENT ORDERED

6 ingredients for successful DTP



Merck's Charlotte McKinnis, executive director of marketing communications, and Ed Slaughter, manager, consumer marketing



## Web Watch

BY DAN MCKILLEN

Physicians are warming up to the idea that having an online dialogue with their patients can actually save time, improve patient care and extend their earning capacity, all at the same time. Ever since the AMA issued a reimbursement code for physician/patient consultations over the Internet, physicians in 11 states have started interacting with their patients online, for a modest fee.

Innovative companies like Burlington, MA-based Healthbanks Inc. use customized medical education, drug databases and news feeds to draw physicians and patients into their online portal. In the portal, patients access educational programs customized by their own physician, and physicians can review medical news highlights and summaries from professional medical conferences in their specialty.

**The AMA issued a reimbursement code for consultations over the Net and physicians are taking advantage.**

Healthbanks also provides physicians with a professional Web site presence that includes a brief bio, office hours, directions, insurance coverage and medical forms.

Another company entering this space is MaxMD, a Jersey City, NJ, company that is the official provider of .md domains. These .md domains allow physicians, healthcare providers and medical institutions to create personalized and portable identities online that can be located quickly by patients using the Internet.

In addition to the .md domains, physicians that sign on with MaxMD get a modest Web site with options to upgrade to a more robust presence. Physicians also get a content dashboard from which they can drag and drop relevant information onto their site for their patients to access.

With so much emphasis on search engine optimization, sponsored search links and all things Google, it's encouraging to see a few innovative alternatives for online healthcare marketers.

*Dan McKillen is president of the HealthDay News Service*