



## MEDFUSION CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

# Santa Monica Hematology and Oncology

**Santa Monica  
Hematology and Oncology**  
Santa Monica, California

4 physicians  
1 location  
5 nurses  
[www.smhoc.net](http://www.smhoc.net)

### PRODUCTS/SERVICES

- Website Development
- Patient Registration
- Appointment Request
- Prescription Renewal
- Online Bill Payment
- Personal Health Record
- Appointment Reminders

## Patient care becomes personalized in collaboration with Medfusion's patient communication solutions

Santa Monica Hematology and Oncology Consultants, a progressive practice in Santa Monica, was in search of a solution to facilitate streamlining their highly-individualized patient care while also enhancing their office efficiency. In 2004, the practice implemented Medfusion's patient-provider communication solutions, and in doing so increased access to patient education, significantly reduced overhead costs, created a method of delivering personal care in a non-office setting, and achieved the first step in their goal of becoming a completely electronic practice.

This four-physician private practice offers comprehensive and highly individualized care for individuals diagnosed with cancer. Santa Monica Hematology and Oncology Consultants (SMHOC) sees between 500 -700 patients a week from within a 500 hundred mile radius and became consumed with the amount of time they spent on inefficient office procedures, unmanageable paperwork and ineffective communication with their patients. Dr. Marilou Terpenning, one of SMHOC's practicing physicians, spearheaded the quest to find an alternative way to communicate with patients. They sought to create a culture in line with their mission of providing contemporary and compassionate treatment for patients while remaining at the forefront of their specialty. "We wanted to create private, individualized and personalized care in a non-office setting," says Dr. Terpenning. With nearly 100% of their patients or families having access to the internet, an interactive website appeared to be the solution to broaden the communication channel with their patients. But it was more difficult than they expected: finding a website with the progressive capabilities that they needed was nearly impossible at a time when online self-service – while accepted in many other industries – was virtually unheard of in healthcare.

## A Lucky Encounter Leads SMHOC to 'Just What They Were Looking For'

In 2003, at an industry tradeshow, Dr. Terpenning was introduced to a sales rep from Medfusion. "It made sense; it seemed to be the product of the future," says Dr. Terpenning after hearing about the patient self-service solutions from Medfusion. Medfusion offered interactive customizable websites that allowed the practice to control all content. A leader

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in pioneering technology, Dr. Terpenning spent the next year researching other web developers to determine what would best fit her practice's needs. Almost a year after Dr. Terpenning was first introduced to Medfusion's solutions, she concluded, "the websites that Medfusion offered were customizable, interactive between patients and staff, and we could modify them on the fly. No one else had this."

Medfusion initiated development of the practice's website in late December of 2004 and immediately expanded the patient-provider communication channels with interactive solutions that allowed patients to request appointments, receive appointment reminders, complete patient pre-registration paperwork in the convenience of their home, pay their bill, request a prescription refill, read valuable patient education, and keep a journal of their personal health record ... all online.

A personalized email welcomes each new patient and encourages them to register on the website to complete their registration and health forms. These forms are submitted electronically to the practice prior to their appointment. There is a notification tree that alerts the billing and front office staff when a patient has submitted a form as part of the pre-consult record-gathering. "The forms are dropped into our EMR as a PDF; it is a one-step process that saves valuable intake time," says Dr. Terpenning. "On average, the forms save ten to fifteen minutes per patient per physician which allows them to spend more time speaking to the patients about their care and current health problems, rather than past medical history."

## Medfusion Solutions Enhance Workflows and Increase Patient Access

At a time when many people were finding information in various chat rooms and surfing the web, one important factor in choosing Medfusion was the ability to provide simple and accurate information to their patients. After initial training with Medfusion, Dr. Terpenning became webmaster of her own site, controlling all content and graphics. Access to accurate patient education is very important for their patients in the sensitive time of coping with cancer. They were even able to seamlessly integrate their *All About Cancer Patient Resource Center* by Cancer Consultants into their website. "With our website, we can provide education available in the same manner as a university setting, something that we would not be able to do within the four walls of our busy practice," Dr. Terpenning says.

The practice participates in a significant annual event, the Revlon® Run-Walk, in which they have more than 300-400 patients join every year. Having this information and details of the event on their website generates the great awareness they need to make this event so successful.

One of the most extensively-used Medfusion applications is appointment reminders. SMHOC was the first practice in Santa Monica to offer automated

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appointment reminder calls; within the past three years they have seen a savings of a full time equivalent of .5 receptionist. They are also able to fill appointment times more efficiently and reduce no shows. The front office staff is able to save phone time and therefore address more pointed patient calls.

Responses from patients, physicians, and staff have been very positive—"We are saving quite a lot of physician and staff time that can be spent providing more one-on-one care with our patients." They are also looking forward to implementing the referral portal in the near future, which will allow them to send and receive referrals securely with their colleagues via the portal.

Overall, Dr. Terpenning is very pleased with Medfusion, "We wanted to create a culture where personalized care became electronic to allow for more one-on-one patient-focused care while also creating efficiencies. Our patients verbalize their gratitude at their ability to interact with us on their schedule and to learn from the resources on our site. Medfusion has been very flexible and responsive to our needs as a practice."