

FROM THE SOCIETY

Using New Technologies to Communicate with Membership and Beyond: SGIM is Getting a New Website!

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Every year, almost 3,000 SGIM members produce research papers, technical reports, educational materials, and online products as part of their work with Society committees, task forces, and the annual meeting. Given the complexity of this information, we as a society are challenged to find meaningful ways to communicate this work to other members and the general public. Certainly members publish monthly in *JGIM*, and the pages of *Forum* are also filled with interesting viewpoints, clinical reviews, and society news. Additionally, the Society communicates with its members through electronic media such as Enews, Quick Hits, and more recently Facebook and Twitter. But perhaps our biggest communications tool can be found online at www.sgim.org.

In 2006–2007, SGIM undertook a major web renovation and introduced to its members a new site, filled with easier-to-find information and specific areas dedicated to research, clinical practice, education, and health policy. Still, the last four years have seen such a tremendous surge in web presence and technology that sgim.org has just not been able to keep up with the demand for internal and external communication needs from the Society and its members.

In 2010, Council made the decision to disband the existing communications committee and convene a new ad hoc committee led by former *JGIM* editor Martha Gerrity that

was tasked with reviewing all SGIM communications and making suggestions for recommendations, with a special eye toward “general strategies for enhancing the capability and interactivity of the SGIM website, including explicit consideration of the website needs for our current publications, *JGIM* and *Forum*, and SGIM committees, task forces, and work groups.”

After significant discussion and a survey of membership, the ad hoc group came to a single over-riding communications objective (SOCO):

To develop, enhance, and promote the SGIM identity (SGIM brand). SGIM is a source you can trust (not influenced by outside funding) for innovative ideas and healthcare research that will change the future of healthcare and produce the next generation of generalist clinicians.

The SOCO was further broken down into two areas—internal and external communications. Branding the Society was at the forefront of both areas so as to “create a greater awareness and affiliation for SGIM as a professional academic home” and “to increase the number of new members...and increase the positive image of SGIM as a ‘go-to’ source for issues related to GIM.” At the meeting in Phoenix, the ad hoc group strongly recommended that the Society look to its website as a primary mechanism for achieving these goals,

citing that www.sgim.org is the public face of the Society.

Since then, SGIM staff have been busy looking for a vendor that will help the Society undertake its branding and website initiative. In August, SGIM joined forces on this with Bridgeline Digital in Baltimore. Bridgeline Digital is a developer of an award-winning web engagement management product suite and interactive business technology solutions that help customers leverage best-in-class web-based technologies to achieve business objectives. It was founded more than 10 years ago and is a public company with 275 employees. It has experience producing sites and branding initiatives for non-profit and community-focused projects, as well as for for-profit companies. Bridgeline will handle SGIM’s website renovation and branding campaign from start to finish, with a full launch of the site available for the 2012 annual meeting in Orlando and a soft launch for testing sometime in early spring.

The new site will bring together SGIM, ACLGIM, and *JGIM* all under one “roof,” although the content available monthly in the journal will still reside on our publisher’s site. There will be new Web 2.0 technologies available, including bulletin boards, discussion groups, videos, podcasting, and future plans for areas where members can network online amongst themselves. Information will be organized more effectively with a more robust search engine and analytics so SGIM can track the most useful parts of the site.

We’re thrilled to start communicating more effectively with you and look forward to bringing you this exciting new product. Stay tuned for more information in the coming months, and check the website frequently for updates on the project.

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