

Catholic Health Care Websites Honored

BY THOMAS C. LAWRY

Of the many awards given out for health care websites, the most prestigious are the annual eHealthcare Leadership Awards, presented by the online publication *eHealthcare Strategy & Trends*, which is based in Rye, NY. The hospitals and health care systems that win these awards are, without fail, especially intent on extending their mission and services into the online environment.

Catholic-sponsored hospitals and systems are increasingly taking advantage of the Web to improve service to consumers while communicating their distinctive histories and missions. Last November, several CHA members were recognized for their Web-development efforts; they won awards in several categories, including best overall website, interactivity, intranets, and health content.

"We have witnessed a lot of great achievements in Web development this past year in all eight award categories," says Mark Gothberg, editor of *eHealthcare Strategy & Trends*. "Like their secular counterparts, many Catholic-sponsored hospitals are leading efforts to use the Internet to connect with online health care consumers."

In determining the award winners, an independent panel of judges familiar with health care and the Internet evaluated more than 1,000 award entries against a set of detailed criteria. Websites were rated according to a standard of Internet excellence in 16 classifications. Organizations competed against those of comparable type, size, and amount of resources.

BEST OVERALL INTERNET SITE

The award for Best Overall Internet Site is by far the most coveted eHealthcare Leadership Award. The 56 criteria for it include health content, organizational information, interactivity, medical care support, integration with the organization's operations, design, and ease of navigation. Two Catholic hospitals won Best Overall awards in their classifications.

Holy Name Hospital, Teaneck, NJ (www.holyname.org),



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was the winner in the 200- to 399-bed category. "Holy Name has a great website design," says Gothberg. "It has excellent usability, superb organizational content, and a high level of health content interactivity."

The hospital's online Breast Health Center drew special praise. "We decided to develop this center as part of our website because our service area suffers from an unusually high incidence of breast cancer," says Catherine Yaxley, Holy Name's vice president for planning and government affairs. "The fact that women are the driving force in utilizing online health services has reinforced our longstanding mission of serving the special needs of this important population."

St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, OR (www.sahpendleton.org) was the award winner in the under-200-bed category. "For a small hospital, [St. Anthony's has] really outstanding content, interactivity, and e-business functions [on its site]," said the judges. "It scores extremely well compared to any size hospital."

BEST INTRANET SITE, SYSTEM

PeaceHealth, Bellevue, WA (www.peacehealth.org), was the winner in this category, which was introduced last year to recognize intranets as an increasingly active area of Web development. Different organizations were judged according to how well they use their internal network to enhance employee productivity and satisfaction (as well as reduce administrative costs) and how well their site design and features encourage site use, among other criteria.

"PeaceHealth won the award in this category because of its wide scope of administration and human resources functions, together with solid design and usability," says Gothberg. "The wealth and detail of organizational information present on the site is a great tool for training a steady flow of new employees."

"Our intranet has been a shining success," says Glen Campbell, the system's Web services manager. "We succeeded on so many levels, not only bringing about cultural change that has fostered a

feeling of community across all PeaceHealth geographic regions but also demonstrating significant savings in terms of improved workflow and other return-on-investment measures.”

BEST INTERACTIVE SITE

The judges in this category focused on the candidate sites' interactive features and technologies, including those that provide health information and health evaluations; establish ongoing relationships via personal Web pages, e-newsletters, or e-mail alerts; and facilitate community groups.

Mount Carmel Health System, Columbus, OH (www.mountcarmelhealth.com), was the winner in the health care system category. Mount Carmel was honored for its site's interactive features, including online health evaluations; online patient registration; and the Babies' Online Nursery, a site through which users can learn about newborns.

St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center, Phoenix, AZ (www.chw.healthinkonline.com/index.asp?ID=15), was the winner in the 400-plus-bed category. The judges were especially impressed with the site's health assessment capabilities. St. Joseph's site, which features a convenient "Look It Up" pull-down menu, keyword search engine, and an extensive selection of recent news articles, is geared to consumers who are seeking particular health information.

BEST SITE DESIGN, SYSTEM

Judging in this category considers website designs according to how unusual, attractive, and engaging they are and whether they facilitate access to key site information while providing strong branding and excellent usability.

Christus Schumpert Health System, Shreveport, LA (www.christusschumpert.com), was honored for its site's "very clean design and navigation, excellent, easy-to-follow layout, and effective use of graphics."

BEST SITE DESIGN, 200- TO 399-BED HOSPITAL

Two Catholic organizations were honored in this category.

Providence Health System of Alaska, Anchorage, AK (www.providence.org/alaska), received an award for its site's engaging design and usability. The judges liked the site's "search box," which, because it is prominent throughout, makes access to key site information easy. They also liked the site's Health Information Library, which provides consumers with useful information, including *Reuters' Health* and a medical dictionary, among other features. The judges also found the site to strongly reflect the group's "branding."

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Saint Francis Medical Center, Cape Girardeau, MO (www.sfmc.net), received an award for its site's consumer appeal, comfortable interface, logical organization, and use of visuals.

"With an increasing number of health care consumers turning to the Internet, it is important that we provide appropriate information to the people of southeast Missouri," says Steven C. Bjelich, Saint Francis's president and CEO. "Our website provides information on the physicians and services available, as well as an explanation of our mission and values. Our Judeo-Christian roots and Catholic ministry help set us apart from other organizations in our area. We are able to convey that information through our website and other means of communication."

BEST HEALTH CONTENT, 400-PLUS-BED HOSPITAL

St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center, Phoenix, AZ (www.chw.healthinkonline.com/index.asp?ID=15), won an award in this category for its site's "excellent interactivity." The judges evaluated the various sites according to how extensive, balanced, up-to-date, well-organized, and credible the site information was and whether the material on it could be tailored to individual needs. They concluded that St. Joseph's site is "where all sites will soon be."

THE ROAD AHEAD

Although U.S. health care is making progress in putting information and services online, few hospitals as yet use Web services to fully meet the needs and expectations of online consumers. "U.S. hospitals and health systems still have leaps to go when it comes to catching up with what online health consumers want," says Gothberg. "The key to e-health success is developing a solid plan that provides definable value to users while helping organizations improve performance. As health care leaders continue to view the Web as not just another marketing vehicle but also as a way to provide cost-effective online services, they will devote more funding to that area and demonstrate an increasing commitment to e-health care."

As the use of Web services becomes increasingly important for hospitals in staying competitive in the ever-changing marketplace, so will it be important in pursuing their mission. This is the next challenge that lies ahead for our nation's hospitals and health systems. □

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