DICOM GRID

The Essential Guide to a Successful Virtual Second Opinion Program

How To Attract Qualified Second Opinion Candidates Online

Revolutionize the way you provide advice and insight to patients with image management solutions for second opinion services.

Make it easy for patients to upload complex medical images and associated reports, and to authorize credit card payments to seek second opinions.

Features

Patient portal for image sharing
Provide patients with a simple, self-service portal for sharing medical images and reports online.

Credit integration
Secure payment capture through seamless credit card integration.

Publish second opinion
Upload and share files for patient review using secure web portals.

Request a Demo

Introduction

On paper, the formula for developing a successful virtual second opinion program is straightforward. Think patient CARE.

C - create awareness of program
A - attain qualified patients
R - receive patient requests
E - execute timely follow up

The Internet age is providing new windows of opportunity for second opinion services. It grants providers the ability to expand their medical reach and share insights with patients around the globe. For patients, they can receive world-class advice without leaving the comfort of their homes.

Ever wonder how to get more patients researching your services? We have that covered. Unsure how to collect patient information? We'll cover that too. We'll even show you how your patients can submit large files, such as medical images, securely through the web.

In this intermediate level eBook, we will dig past the basics and look at some impactful, tried-and-true ways to transform your current strategy.

It is commonplace for medical practices to offer second opinion services to help confirm a diagnosis and treatment plan, or recommend additional treatment options. By taking it virtual, you can breathe new life into your second opinion program by making it easy, quick, and cost effective to reach patients around the globe.

Chapter 1

Create awareness of program

Attain qualified patients

Receive patient requests

Execute timely follow up

Chapter 1 Create Awareness of Program

The hub of all your activity starts with your website. But what good is your website if no one can find it?

It is important to optimize your second opinion program's website to increase the odds of being found by potential patients online.

Where is the first place your patients turn for medical answers? As members of the healthcare community, we like to think they go straight to their doctors for insight. But more often than not, patients begin their preliminary search on Google. So how do you capture the attention of potential patients online and grow awareness of your service? You need to position your organization to intercept patient search queries. It boils down to three basic techniques:

1 Optimize your website for the key phrases patients use to search for information regarding your type of service.

2 Provide valuable content aligning with those key phrases.

3 Build links from authoritative sources back to your website.

+SMCI
Southern Memorial Cancer Institute

A Note about Southern Memorial Cancer Institue
For the purpose of this eBook, we present you with Southern Memorial Cancer Institute, a fictional healthcare institution used to better illustrate the program details we are presenting.

1 Optimize your website for key phrases

One of the surest ways to attract proactive patients online is to optimize your site with the same words and phrases they are typing into search engines. The first step is to put yourself in the shoes of your patients. What questions do they want answers to? How can you help them? Brainstorm phrases your potential patients are likely using to do research. Here is what a list of key phrases could look like for a second opinion program specializing in women's health. (Key phrases in bold.)

- How to ask a doctor for **second opinion on mammogram**?
- Talk to **online doctors about breast biopsy**?
- Where to get **second opinion advice about breast cancer**?
- Can a **doctor review my mammogram online**?

Once you have a list of key phrases, you can start integrating them throughout your site. Key phrases should be incorporated in all of the title tags of your site, in your page headers, and throughout the site's body text. It also doesn't hurt to include key phrases in your page's meta tag descriptions. Each page of your website should be optimized for a unique key phrase or set of phrases.

Need help with the brainstorming process?
Try plugging a key phrase into ubersuggest.org. It will suggest related key phrases and give you the jumpstart you need.

Here is an example of how title tags and meta tags show up in Google. Notice how well they appropriately describe the page? The title below incorporates several key phrases: "getting a second opinion," "second opinion cancer," "cancer diagnosis consultation," and this page will likely show up for a variety of searches related to the aforementioned keywords.

title tag →

Getting a Second Opinion | Cancer Diagnosis Consultation
www.SMCI.org/.../page-123434.htm... Southern Memorial Canc...

meta tag →

It is common for patients to **get second opinions** when diagnosing **cancer**... and we invite you for a **consultation** to decide which...

The language used in the title tags and meta descriptions should be consistent with the content appearing on the page. In our example, you'll see that the content on the landing page mimics the key phrases used in the title and meta tags. This consistency will help visitors confirm that they have landed in the right place.

Note: each page on your website should be optimized with a unique title tag, meta tag, and headers.

2 Provide valuable information

One proven method of attracting proactive patients is by providing valuable information. Blogs are a great engine for keeping your website updated with fresh findings and helpful resources. When creating new blog content, be sure to incorporate your keywords and phrases. In doing so, you improve your chances of being found when a patient types a related search query into Google or Bing. The nice thing about blogging is that it can take on any form. You don't have to be limited to just text. Video, slideshares, and audio content are all great ways to mix it up.

Wondering what to blog or write about? Here are a few ideas to get you thinking.

Utilize Video Interviews

Create a series of "meet the expert" videos. Interview each of your clinicians highlighting their specialties and how they are helping patients. In the above example, notice how video content is promoted throughout the website.

Offer Helpful Tips

Do a weekly slideshare answering basic health questions and concerns.

Promote Success

Publicize patient experiences and interactions with your service. SMCI does this below by regularly building a portfolio of real-life examples and stories.

Answer Commonly Asked Questions

Refurbish your commonly asked questions into individual posts. Some examples include, *'What do I need to get a second opinion?'* or *'What benefits are there to getting a second opinion?'*.

Tips From The Expert

TIP 1

Your blog content should focus on addressing the needs and wants of your ideal patients, and how you are positioned to help them.

Use engaging and helpful headlines to draw in your readers. Numbered lists and patient-focused content are always a safe bet. Here are a few examples:

1. 5 things to expect when seeking a second opinion online
2. How to get a second opinion without taking time off of work
3. Preparing for a second opinion: Three pieces of medical information you should have ready

At the bottom of each post make sure to include a clickable graphic promoting a helpful resource or service that you offer.

3 Build links with credible sources

The last piece of the puzzle is to get other quality sites to link back to your site. This practice is referred to as "link building", and it can help to improve the rankings your site receives in search engines. The more links you have directing towards your site from credible sources, the better. Large institutions inherently have an easier time with "link building" because of their reputation and footprint. Smaller organizations and practices might have to work a bit harder to gain recognition in the virtual space. Keep in mind that if people find your content to be helpful and educational, they will be inclined to link to it. Also, don't be afraid to reach out to authoritative sources with ideas for content. There are numerous associations, blogs, and mainstream media publications who welcome the opportunity to speak to clinicians and experts in the field.

Tips From The Expert

Have you heard of HARO (Help a Reporter Out)? HARO connects news sources with journalists. You can subscribe to HARO to receive updates, like the one below, delivered right to your inbox. If something speaks to you, you can contact the journalist directly.

Query:

I'm looking for doctors (or former medical school students) to share any surprising, practical health advice they've learned on the job or in life that was noticeably absent from what they learned in medical school. For instance, are medical students not taught much about nutrition or how alternative therapies like acupuncture can stave off health problems? Please include your advice and tips in your initial email to me—the more specific, practical, and surprising your tips or advice the better. Thanks so much!

Name: Joanna Sammer Managed Healthcare Executive

Email Editor

Media Outlet: Managed Healthcare Executive

Chapter 2

Create awareness of program

Attain qualified patients

Receive patient requests

Execute timely follow up

Chapter 2 Attain Qualified Patients

The process doesn't end with attracting the appropriate patients to your site. Your next step is to entice them to get in touch with you by requesting a consultation. Your website is going to do most of the legwork.

Just like in real-life, first impressions really count. When patients visit your site for the first time they will be asking themselves the following questions:

- Do I feel welcome?
- Is this where I am supposed to be?
- Does this seem like a credible organization?
- Can I trust this organization?
- Is this a secure site?

On average, your potential patients will only give your website 3-5 seconds to gauge the above criteria and decide if they should stay or leave. During those few precious seconds, you need to grab attention and get your message across.

You do not need to be the next Apple® graphic designer to create a professional looking site, but you do need to follow a few basic principles.

Tell people what to do

Entice patients to take action on your website. What do you want patients to do when they visit your site? Make it obvious with a call-to-action button that quite literally prompts patients on what to do. Your primary call-to-action should be located at the top of the page with no scrolling needed to find it. Take a look at SMCI's homepage which guides patients to 'Get Started'.

What is a call-to-action? A call-to-action is either an image or line of text that will tell patients what to do. It literally is a call to take action. Below is an example.

▶ Click here to meet our specialists

Use clear messaging
Start with an informative headline that explains the most important part of your value proposition. Your headline should be a top-level explanation of your service. It must concisely articulate the benefits your patient will receive when using your service.

Incorporate color
Use pops of color to draw the eye into special page elements. Don't over do it though. Stick to 2-5 main colors and keep them consistent across your website and any printed materials.

Talk to your target patients
Whom are you trying to reach with the content on your site? Imagine your ideal patients and write as if you are speaking to them. Industry jargon and technical terminology will not resonate with anyone you are trying to reach. Your content must be easy to consume: simplify, simplify, simplify!

Use basic typography
Your website should be easy to scan for information. To achieve this, choose a basic font like Arial or Times New Roman for your headers and body text. These fonts render correctly across all browsers. Use headers and sub headers to break up blocks of text on the page.

Be a trustworthy source

Your patients want to know they are in good hands. Does your website scream trustworthy and credible? Testimonials and success stories can quickly enhance that perception. Request quotes from patients regarding all aspects of their experiences using your service (the process of submitting their information, timeliness of the consultation, and the thoroughness of the advice). Take a look at the great job SMCI does below to build credibility using testimonials:

Patients Tell Us...

"From the first time I reached out to SMCI for an appointment I felt like they truly cared about what was best for me. They make you feel like you're their only patient; I never felt rushed and they were always 100% on top of my care. I've even recommended Southern Memorial to family members and friends in need of care."

Jon Beatty

▶ See More

Optimize for mobile devices

Does your site render appropriately across browsers and devices? Patients are increasingly tied to their mobile devices and searching sites on the go. Here are a few tips to improve website accessibility on smartphones and tablets:

- Avoid flash sites
- Make your phone number a clickable link
- Use proper image formats (JPEGs, HTML5)
- Optimize your pages for fast loading

Chapter 3

Create awareness of program

Attain qualified patients

Receive patient requests

Execute timely follow up

Chapter 3 Receive Patient Requests

Now that you have wowed your web visitors with your site, you must guide them through the process of securely submitting their medical information and imaging data.

Medical Information

What information do you need to know about your patients in order to formulate a solid second opinion? At a minimum, you will need a description of symptoms and a medical history. You might want to know why the patient is contacting you, and what type of information they are seeking. Don't forget to ask for the patient's basic contact information (name, phone number, email, address) for follow up communications. Here is an example form:

First Name **Last Name**

Email **Phone**

I want to get a second opinion about:

- Mammogram
- MRI
- CT Scan
- XRAY
- PET Scan
- Other:

What are your symptoms?

Tell us about your medical history.

Can you provide any additional information?

- I agree to the terms and conditions.
- I have read and understand the privacy policy.

Submit

Securing your Website

Patient privacy is of upmost importance. Below are a few areas you should focus on when securing your website:

1. Terms and agreement – include a terms and agreement acknowledgement form on your website. It should clearly state the intentions of your service, disclaimers, and privacy policies.

2. Secure transmission – any webpage used to collect patient health information must be protected by SSL (Secure Socket Layer). A SSL protected website is marked in the URL with an https (instead of http) to notify visitors of its security.

3. Backup patient data – create a disaster recovery plan by archiving secondary copies of patient information. Check with your web host to see if they provide this service.

4. Authorize users – patient information should only be accessible by authorized users. If you are working with outside vendors, make sure they are a trusted HIPAA-secured business, with a signed privacy agreement. You should also be able to run an audit report of everyone logging in to access information.

Users	Email	Permissions
James Smith	JSmith@smci.com	
Kristen Perkins	KPerkins@smci.com	
Taylor Jones	TJones@smci.com	

5. Deletion of data – you will need to be able to permanently delete data from your records. This includes all hard-drives, storage, and back-up archives.

Medical Image Submission

Gaining insight into a patients' symptoms and conditions is helpful, but it only tells part of the story. In situations where patients have had previous imaging work done, you are going to want access to priors. Giving your patients the ability to electronically submit imaging data is an absolute must.

Due to the size and file formats, medical images can be the most difficult for patients to share. But good news: It can be done! Patient portals for medical images allow patients to upload and share complex imaging data during the submission process in just a few clicks.

Providing your patients with an electronic solution eliminates the headaches and long lead times associated with transferring images by courier services.

DICOM Grid's image-sharing portal is specifically designed for second opinion services. It guides patients through a three-step, self-service process to easily submit images and reports directly to your organization.

Approaching 3rd Party Integration

Most virtual second opinion services incorporate third party solution(s) for capturing patient information. In choosing vendors, you should be mindful of the following criteria:

Security

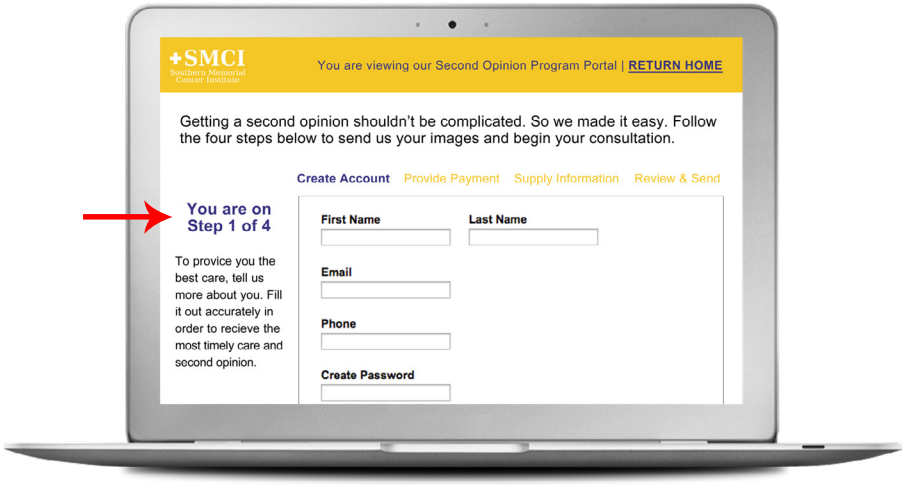
The biggest factor to keep in mind is your patients' privacy. Are your vendors complying with HIPAA regulations? Request to see their certifications and documentations.

Brand consistency

Do you have the ability to private label the solution? It is best to keep elements (logos, layout, sizes, fonts) on your site fairly consistent across the board. Request examples and proofs from your vendor to gain an understanding of your branding options.

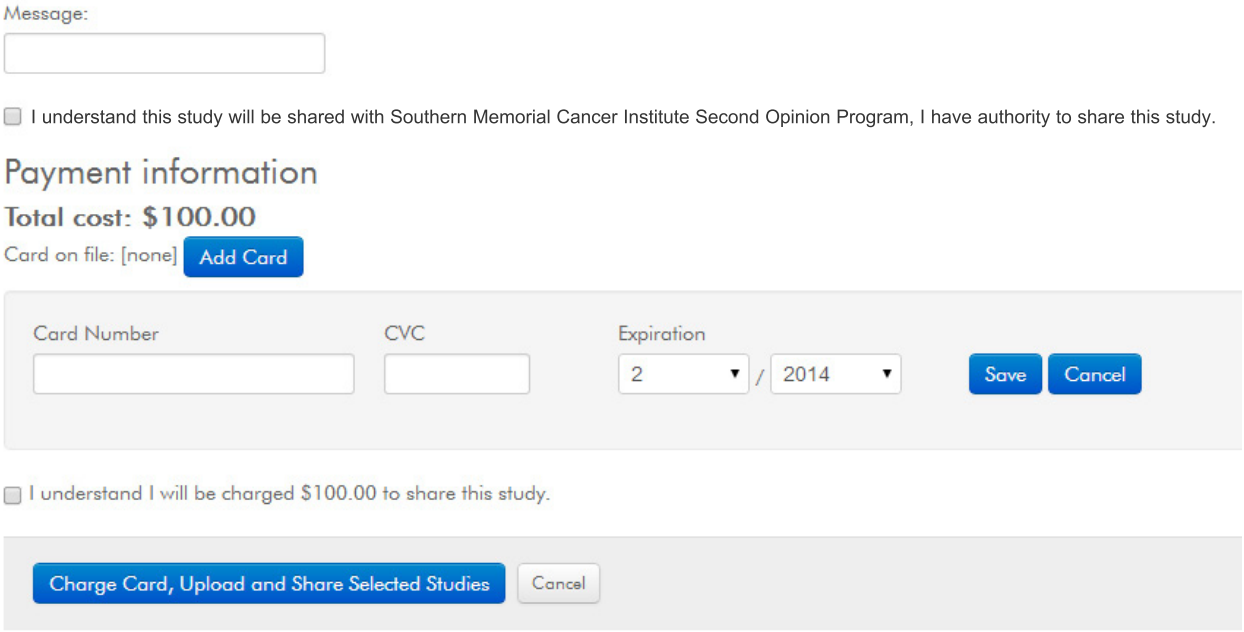
Navigation

Make sure your patients know where they are in the submittal process. Having a solid navigation system across your portals helps with usability. Can you incorporate breadcrumbs or updates on each page to give your patients a clear navigation trail?



Credit card integration

A frequently overlooked feature is credit card integration. When was the last time you spent money on a website without knowing exactly what you are getting in return? This same concept applies when qualifying your patients online. Charging a fee per submittal can help to cover administrative costs and keep bogus submissions at bay. Most patients will think twice before charging their credit cards, and will do their due diligence before making a request. The end result is that you will be receiving the most legitimate and qualified candidates.



Chapter 4

Create awareness of program
Attain qualified patients
Receive patient requests
Execute timely follow up

Chapter 4 Executing Timely Follow Up

With all this talk about attracting patients and guiding them through the process, it is important not to lose sight of the final piece of the puzzle: handling patient requests.

Communication is key

Your second opinion program will be active and available to patients 24/7, meaning you could receive submissions anytime. Although you don't need to be staffed at all hours of the day, make sure to frequently monitor incoming requests so that you can respond in a timely manner. It may be necessary to hire a coordinator to oversee the process of organizing requests, assigning requests to specialists, and publishing findings.

Following Up

Don't make promises you can't keep; but don't be vague either. For example, never send a patient a short note saying, "Thank you for your request, we'll follow up shortly". The word shortly can mean different things to different patients. You don't want your patients to be unnecessarily confused, frustrated or worried. Here's an exemplary correspondence:

Thank You for Requesting a Second Opinion

Inbox x

SMCI Second Opinion Support@SMCI.org via sendgrid.ir 11:42 AM (1 hour ago)

to me

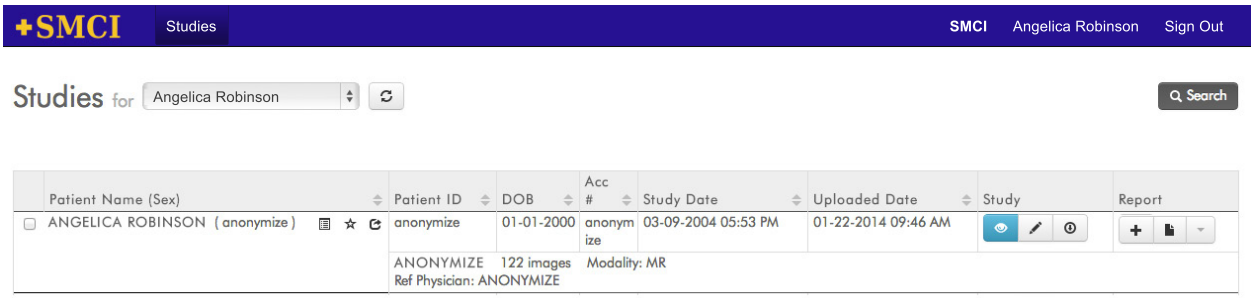
Dear Angelica Robinson

Thank you for submitting your request for a second opinion. SMCI has received your medical information, and our team has already started to review your request. You will be hearing from us with an update within the next 72 hours. During that time frame we may need to get in touch with you for additional information. If necessary, we will use the contact information you provided during the submittal process. For further assistance, do not hesitate to view our support page or contact us directly at info@SMCI.com.

You may want to consider sending multiple status updates to keep your patients informed. There are plenty of ways to automate email notifications to keep your patients updated on the status of their submissions. Using DICOM Grid, notification triggers can be used to generate and send automated emails to keep patients up-to-date on any activity.

Publishing Opinions for Patient Review

The final step of the process is to publish opinions to a secure portal for patient review. You should not be sending anything containing patient information by email. Using a HIPAA compliant portal like DICOM Grid's allows you to upload files to patient accounts. Patients can create accounts through the system and securely login to review the findings.

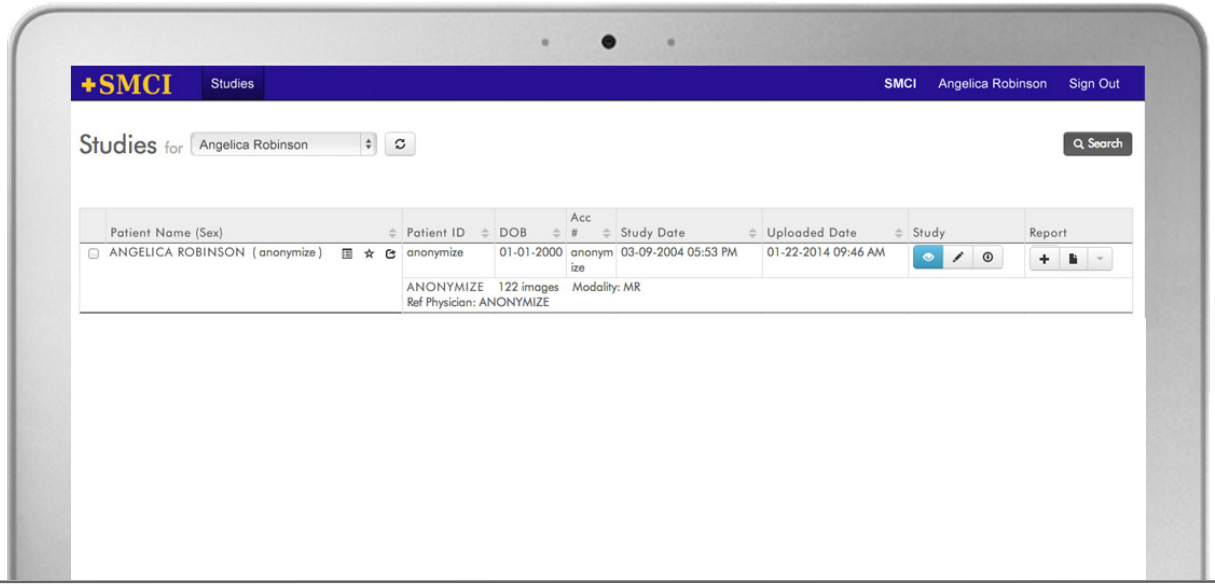


Offer Support

At a bare minimum your website should include a list of commonly asked questions, tutorial videos, and a support help line/email. Another support tool worth considering is a live chat. Live chats help you to communicate with patients in real-time. At the time of this publication your options for HIPAA live chat are limited. LiveHelpNow offers a simple, intuitive interface for sending messages through a secure 256-bit encryption. LivePerson is another popular live chat tool.

Educating Patients on Next Steps

During the second opinion evaluation, you might find certain patients to be strong candidates for your institution's treatment plans. It's important for patients to be as informed and as confident as possible when making treatment decisions. Be sure to educate patients about your offerings, especially if you believe you can provide a simpler, less expensive, or more effective option.



Conclusion

After reading this eBook you should be confident in your understanding of some of the best practices for implementing a successful virtual second opinion strategy. We covered techniques for attracting qualified patients to your website, the tools you need to collect patient information, and tips for providing proper feedback.

It will take some time and testing to get things running smoothly. It's important to keep trying, even if you don't get the results you want right away. Make adjustments and continue to do your research on techniques and technologies that can support your mission.

To learn more about the features discussed throughout this eBook, contact DICOM Grid to request a demo on our second opinion platform for image management.

Request a Demo

DICOM GRID