

Simple Machines Forum, a Solution for Dialogue Optimization between Physicians

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Abstract

We developed an instrument which can ensure a quick and easy dialogue between the physicians of the Oncology Institute and family physicians. The platform we chose was Simple Machines Forum (abbreviated as SMF), a free Internet forum (BBS - Bulletin Board System) application. The purpose of this article is not to detail the software platform, but to emphasize the facilities and advantages of using this solution in the medical community.

Keywords: Bulletin Board System; Internet forum; Medical community.

Introduction

The idea of the project below appeared after a discussion between the physicians of the Oncology Institute "Ion Chiricuța" Cluj-Napoca (IOCN) and the members of the Medical Informatics and Biostatistics department of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Iuliu Hațieganu" Cluj-Napoca. The conclusion of the discussion was the necessity of an instrument which can ensure a quick and easy dialogue between the physicians of the Institute and family physicians. A solution for this dialogue could have been the well-known e-mail, but we wanted a dedicated and personalized instrument, with a high degree of security as to the confidentiality of medical data. From these reasons, the solution was to have a discussions forum, which we configured according to the needs of physicians in the Oncology Institute.

The idea of using the instrument "discussions forum" in the medical community is not a new idea. There are several implementations of this kind: „Medical Forum – The medical online community” [1], „Better Medicine for Healthgrades” [2], „Medipedia” [3] and other examples. Regardless of these implementations for a large community, any internet user is able to access the content and to comment on different subjects, the IOCN [4] forum is addressed to a closed community, the members of the IOCN and their collaborators, family physicians. The access of the last category is permitted after a filed request, verified and approved by the IOCN manager. The strict access of participants on the IOCN forum allows maintaining a high professional level of discussions, and guarantees the confidentiality of medical information.

Material and Method

The platform we chose was Simple Machines Forum (abbreviated as SMF) [5], a free Internet

forum (BBS - Bulletin Board System) application.

The purpose of this article is not to detail the software platform, but to emphasize the facilities and advantages of using this solution in the medical community. Although we don't want to detail, a short presentation of the history of this platform and of technical data is necessary.

Simple Machines started as a project under Lewis Media, LLC. In 2007, the Simple Machines Forum project was split off and formed its own company, organized as Simple Machines, LLC. In June of 2010, Simple Machines reformed as a not-for-profit organization (NPO) registered in Nevada. The people behind SMF are a diverse group of individuals who, in their free time, help make SMF what it is today, and help SMF take strides into the future. Many different skills are expressed within several teams, including customization, development, documentation, internationalization, support, project support, and marketing. Each team works together to help SMF grow and reach its full potential.

Simple Machines software is not only free but also Open Source. This means that anyone is free to modify and improve the source code as they see fit. And they may redistribute their modified code, as long as they follow these three guidelines [6]:

1. Retain the entire Simple Machines copyright and licensing notice in every file.
2. Make clear that the changed product is not the same as the original Simple Machines software (SMF or any other product).
3. Do not use the Simple Machines name (or the names of any Simple Machines contributors) to endorse or promote the modified software.

Open Source Software is used nowadays in a wide area of medical or medical informatics fields such as medical management [7], public health data collection [8], medical education [9], [10], medical records [11], images analysis [12] and more.

SMF is written in the popular language PHP and uses a MySQL database. It is designed to provide you with all the features you need from a bulletin board while having an absolute minimal impact on the resources of the server. The requirements for server are: programming language PHP 4 or PHP 5, web servers Apache 1.3, Apache 2.0-2.2, Microsoft IIS, Lighttpd or Nginx, operating systems GNU-Linux, BSD Unix, Microsoft Windows or Apple Mac OS. As for the browser and client requirements, these are: compatible browsers Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, Apple Safari, Mozilla, Internet Explorer, Opera or Konqueror, required Plugins/technologies HTML, Javascript, AJAX, CSS. There are over 40 languages supported by Simple Machines Forum including Romanian. Another important facility is that Simple Machine Forum can be used on mobile devices such as Android devices, iPhone, BlackBerry, Windows Phone 7, Symbian Phones (Nokia), HP WebOS.

Results

The main facilities of IOCN forum are:

- The interface is simple, intuitive, translated entirely into Romanian. The main page of the forum is presented in Figure 1.
- The access is secure and individualized for each user; the data needed to access the forum is completed by the users on a demand, verified and approved by the IOCN management. The requests to register can be filed online. The images below present the secure access on the IOCN forum, and the registration form.

As to the functioning of the forum, there are two distinct levels:

- On one hand, there are common discussions, on different themes, moderated by a physician from IOCN. The themes can be proposed by the IOCN team, or by any member of the forum who can initiate a new discussion subject.
- On the other hand, there is the possibility to exchange private messages between users, mostly confidential discussion between the family doctor and the IOCN physician. This is the way the confidential information can be sent.

Institutul Oncologic Cluj-Napoca în colaborare cu medicii de familie

Comunicare pentru eficiență

IOCN Institutul Oncologic "Prof. Dr. Ion Chiriacuș" Cluj-Napoca
Membru al Organizației Internaționale de Cancer "OERC"

BANCA TRANSILVANIA
Banca oamenilor întreprinzători

DIVIZIA PENTRU MEDICI

Salut admin
Afișează mesajele necitite postate după ultima vizită.
Afișează răspunsurile noi la mesajele tale postate.
Noiembrie 10, 2012, 02:02:47 p.m.

Stiri:
Vă rugăm completați formularul de înscriere de la adresa:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/viewform?formkey=dESQMnVQeGJWYkxHeld2R1RpNWFIV2c6MQ>

Pagina de Start | Ajutor | Căutare | Administrare | Moderare | Profil | Mesajele Mele | Membri | ieșire

Institutul Oncologic Cluj-Napoca în colaborare cu medicii de familie

Subiecte generale Mesaje Necitite

	Mesaj de întâmpinare Bine ați venit pe forumul „Institutul Oncologic Cluj-Napoca în colaborare cu medicii de familie”. Scopul acestui forum este de a îmbunătăți comunicarea cu medicii de familie în vederea eficientizării actului medical, în ceea ce privește patologia oncologică.	0 Mesaje postate 0 Subiecte	
	Regulament de funcționare Moderator: Lăncrăjan Ionuț (Chirurgie ginecologică IOCN)	1 Mesaje postate 1 Subiecte	Ultimul mesaj de admin în Regulament de funcționar... Martie 20, 2012, 05:15:05 p.m.
	Congrese și manifestări științifice Secțiune dedicată publicării anunțurilor privitoare la congrese și diverse alte manifestări științifice Moderatori: Lăncrăjan Ionuț (Chirurgie ginecologică IOCN), # Singiorzan Laura (administrare)	4 Mesaje postate 2 Subiecte	Ultimul mesaj de # Singiorzan Laura (administrare) în Cursuri Postuniversitare... Iunie 27, 2012, 09:13:41 a.m.
	Discuții de interes general Secțiune de discuții libere. Moderator: # Singiorzan Laura (administrare)	2 Mesaje postate 1 Subiecte	Ultimul mesaj de Dr. A A (administrare) în Re: Acordai un califica... Martie 20, 2012, 05:19:19 p.m.

Psiho-oncologie Mesaje Necitite

	Considerații generale Informații cu privire la reacții, probleme psiho-emoționale ale pacienților oncologici și intervenții validate pentru rezolvarea acestora	1 Mesaje postate 1 Subiecte	Ultimul mesaj de # Pop Florina (Psiholog IOCN) în Considerații generale de... Iunie 18, 2012, 09:22:09 a.m.
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Programul de screening pentru cancerul de col uterin Mesaje Necitite

	Informații necesare contractării rețelei de screening	1 Mesaje postate 1 Subiecte	Ultimul mesaj de # Singiorzan Laura (administrare) în Informații necesare cont... Iulie 11, 2012, 07:42:02 a.m.
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Figure 1. The main page of the forum “IOCN in collaboration with family physicians”

Institutul Oncologic Cluj-Napoca în colaborare cu medicii de familie

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Membru al Organizației Internaționale de Cancer "OERC"

BANCA TRANSILVANIA
Banca oamenilor întreprinzători

DIVIZIA PENTRU MEDICI

Bine ai venit, **Vizitator**. Te rugăm să te autentifici ori să te înregistrezi.

Pentru totdeauna

Autentifică-vă cu numele de utilizator, parola și durata sesiunii

Stiri:
Vă rugăm completați formularul de înscriere de la adresa:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/viewform?formkey=dESQMnVQeGJWYkxHeld2R1RpNWFIV2c6MQ>

Pagina de Start | Ajutor | Autentificare | Înregistrare

Institutul Oncologic Cluj-Napoca în colaborare cu medicii de familie

Avertizare !
Numai membrii înregistrați au permisiunea de a accesa această secțiune.
Vă rugăm să vă autentificați mai jos sau înregistrați un cont cu Institutul Oncologic Cluj-Napoca în colaborare cu medicii de familie.

Autentificare

Nume de utilizator:

Parolă:

Durata sesiunii în minute:

Sesiunea nu expiră:

Ai uitat parola ?

SMF 2.0.2 | SMF © 2011, Simple Machines
XHTML WAP2

Figure 2. The Log in page of the forum “IOCN in collaboration with family physicians”

FORMULAR DE ÎNSCRIERE

Formular de înscriere ca membru al forumului de discuții Institutul Oncologic Cluj-Napoca în colaborare cu medicii de familie

*Obligatori

Nume utilizator solicitat *

OBLIGATORIU sub forma nume + prenume. De exemplu "alingiurcean"

Parola solicitata *

pot fi litere, cifre, fără spații

Adresa de email personală *

ex: aaa@umfcluj.ro

Nume *

Prenume *

Locul de munca *

Specialitatea *

ex: medic de familie, medic specialist oncolog etc

Numar de telefon *

Figure 3. The registration form of the forum "IOCN in collaboration with family physicians"

The means of sending private messages between forum members is similar to the well-known electronic e-mail, the difference is that the messages can be sent only to members of the forum. There is the possibility to attach files to the message: photos, videos, analysis results, etc. All these messages are kept in the archive, so they can be accessed at any time.

Another important facility is the search engine, the search could be realised after key words in the titles of discussion subjects, in the body of messages or in the list of users name.

In order to find and identify the members of the IOCN forum community, the list of members allows the search of users, of contact details or statistics as to their activity on the forum.

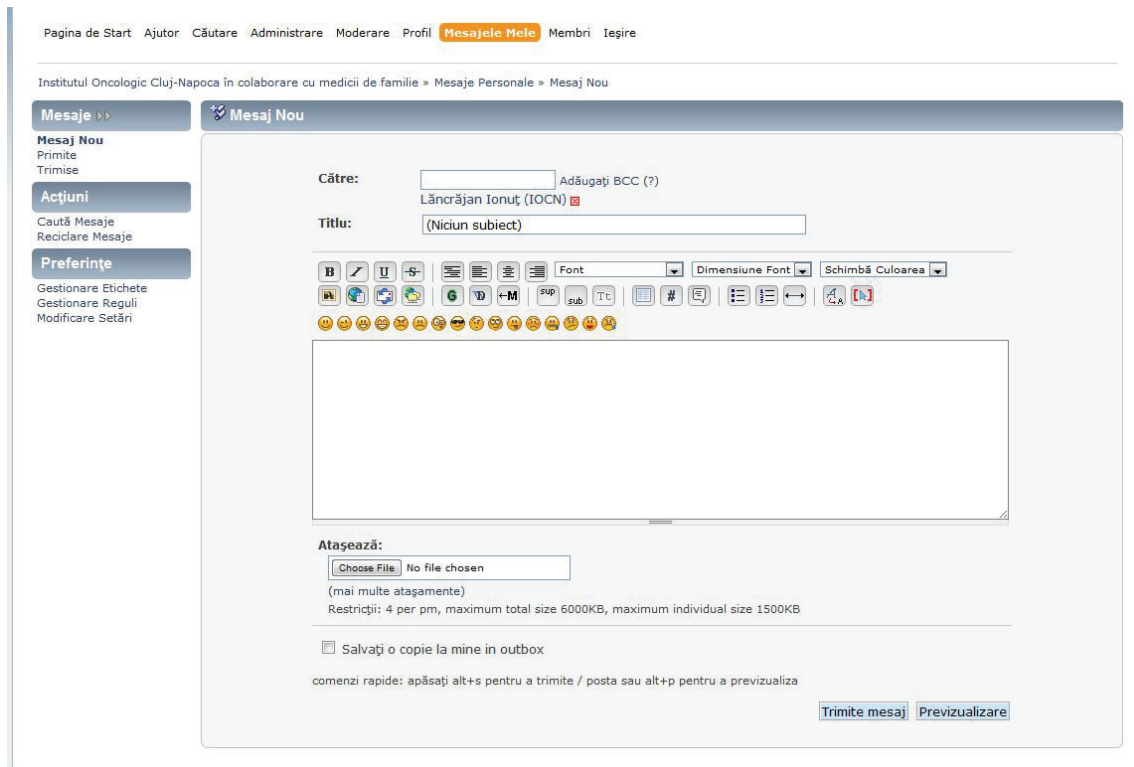


Figure 4. The windows of with private messages of the forum “IOCN in collaboration with family physicians”



Figure 5. The search engine of the forum “IOCN in collaboration with family physicians”

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BANCA TRANSILVANIA Banca oamenilor întreprinzători

DIVIZIA PENTRU MEDICI

Salut admin
 Afixează mesajele necitite postate după ultima vizită.
 Afixează răspunsurile noi la mesajele tale postate.
 Noiembrie 10, 2012, 02:39:16 p.m.

Stiri:
 Vă rugăm completați formularul de înscriere de la adresa:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dESQMnVQeGJWYkxHeld2R1RpNWFIVZc6MQ>

Pagina de Start Ajutor Căutare Administrare Moderare Profil Mesajele Mele **Membri** ieșire

Institutul Oncologic Cluj-Napoca în colaborare cu medicii de familie » Lista de membri » Sunt afișați membrii de la 1 până la 30 (din totalul de 79 membri)

Lista de membri ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Pagini: [1] 2 3

AFIȘEAZĂ TOȚI MEMBRII CAUTĂ MEMBRI

Statut	Nume de utilizator	Adresa de email	Website	ICQ	AIM	YIM	MSN	Rang	Data înregistrării	Mesaje postate
<input type="checkbox"/>	# Pop Florina (Psiholog IOCN)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-08	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	# Singiorzan Laura (administrare)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Global Moderator	2012-04-23	5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	admin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Administrator	2012-03-15	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Andronic Adriana (Holbav/BV)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-06	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Badulescu Claudiu (IOCN rezident chirurg)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-13	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Balogh Magdalena (Ciumești/SM)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-06	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bărbuș Dana Mihaela (Baia Mare/ MM)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-06	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Besenyodi Noemi (Satu Mare/SM)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-11	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bilatiu Carmencita (Satu-Mare/SM)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-16	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Biliboacă Cristina (Făgăraș/BV)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-06	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bocai Daciana (Vișeu de Sus/MM)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-06	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Botca Corina (Râu de Mori/HD)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-06	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Butanu Claudia (Florești/CJ)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-06	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Butnaru Anton (Cugir/AB)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-06	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Câmpeanu Emil (Petroșani/HD)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-06	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chiș-Petrule Angela (Dobrin/SJ)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-06	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ciomei Aurora (Dragu/SJ)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-06	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cojocar Ilie (Năsăud/BN)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Newbie	2012-06-06	0

Figure 6. The of members of the forum “IOCN in collaboration with family physicians”

Discussions

The IOCN forum was launched and presented at the Regional Conference of Family Physicians 24-26 May 2012 in Cluj-Napoca, when the greatest part of the forum members registered on the forum. Now the forum has 80 users, mostly from Cluj, Hunedoara, Alba Iulia, Maramureș, Brașov, Satu Mare, Bistrița Năsăud, Sălaj. In this context there were established two levels of forum functioning: the private communication between physicians, and the possibility to make announcements regarding conferences, scientific events, announcements for forum members.

At this conference the main interest areas were established, which are now implemented or are to be developed – the themes, discussions subjects in the forum. Now, the structure of the forum is the following:

General subjects: Welcome message, Functioning Regulations, Conferences and Scientific Manifestations, General Discussions.

Psyco-oncology with the following topics: General considerations.

The screening program for cervical cancer with the following topics: General aspects about the contract of screening network, the Order 537/2012, The IIIrd Consensus Regional Conference.

The content of the forum is developing, and there are several areas that need to be added. Based on users suggestions the topics that will be added are:

Surgical interventions:

How to prepare the patient for surgical intervention?

The recovery after surgery.

Radiotherapy/ Chemotherapy:

How to prepare the patient for radiotherapy/ chemotherapy?,

How to explain the side effects of therapy?,

The insertion of the patient into the society after radiotherapy/chemotherapy.

Conclusions

A tool like the forum we presented is a structure in continuous changing and development. Even if our forum has already a large number of users for the proposed aim, his life is yet at the beginning and his future development depends only on the members of the new formed community interests to change it in an useful and powerful tool.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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