

Press Release – immediate July 3 2002

ThirdAid.com launches in London

Just under one month ago, ThirdAid.com, a patient-based support site based around the same idea of Classmates.com or FriendsReunited.com – but uniting people by medical condition rather than school, was launched.

It means that a 15-year-old boy, for example, diagnosed with Cancer of the Kidneys can now contact other 15-year-olds with exactly the same condition, therefore exchanging experiences, finding solace, and providing a degree of comfort not possible before.

The site was developed by 25 year-old Sarah Frost after she had suffered a debilitating spinal injury. She was keen to find other sufferers who could share the anxiety and frustration that her condition had caused.

ThirdAid.com is unique because it offers an all-encompassing site that is patient driven and provides users with the ability to e-mail fellow sufferers and carers. Healthcare professionals can also provide advice and highlight new treatments available.

The site lists over 500 medical conditions from cancers to narcolepsy, and over 342 conditions have been signed up to already providing immediate value to anyone that registers.

Registered users have joined from over 20 countries from the UK to Uruguay. The site now has over 2,000 registered patients, among these; 320 are from the UK; 47 from Sweden; 46 from the US, and 41 from Australia. 554 users are from unspecified countries and there are 215 conditions that have 2 or more registered users with 35 conditions that have 10 or more registered users.

With little marketing much of the traffic increase has been viral; users are registering from as far away as Vietnam, Australia, and Finland. The nature of the site is ideal for this kind of marketing and the number of users the site has already attracted is testament to this.

As a patient-based site, ThirdAid provides people with a forum to contact other sufferers or carers and share the emotional and day-to-day problems that only they and their families and friends can truly understand. For people caring for, or for those suffering from debilitating or long-term and serious conditions, it can really help to be able to talk to people in the same position. That kind of support can be invaluable.

The response has been very encouraging and the site appears to be hitting the right note. From users contacting fellow sufferers and sharing their knowledge to doctors, NHS hospitals and medical charities keen to provide either advice or offer their patients a forum to discuss their condition with others, ThirdAid gives them the means to do just that.

Sarah Frost is delighted at the response and the ideas and advice that many users have offered:

“I didn’t expect it to start off so quickly but we have had so much feedback already. Users are suggesting new conditions to add, doctors are offering their help and we have even had an NHS hospital that wants to hand out leaflets to patients to promote the site. Of course, the global interest that it has generated has been wonderful and it shows how successful it can be in a viral sense. We are now working flat out to make the site multi-lingual.”

The initial response has been very encouraging and Sarah is now keen to take the site to the next level, inviting sponsors to cooperate, creating links to partner sites and getting more involvement from healthcare professionals in both conventional and alternative therapies.

For many users the site has already been of use:

"I would just like to say how grateful I am for this site. My son is suffering from an inflammatory bowel disease and I wanted to find out how other people cope with the condition. I found around fifteen users registered with his disease and I e-mailed a few of them. Three of them have already e-mailed me back. I now have some great advice and feel a little less fearful about what he has to deal with. I shall be coming back again. Thanks".

"Excellent website just what I have been looking for some time, especially has some of the subjects covered are not covered anywhere else mainly in support for suffers and their partners. Now we can let others know of the effects of treatment in some areas especially ones that are covered up and not discussed until you find out for yourself."

"I just signed up today under narcolepsy. Your site was discovered by my former son-in-law, a physician from Ireland living in the U. S. Congratulations for pursuing a solution to a very real problem!"

"I've received correspondence from 2 members with the same ailment as I. That's 2 more people than I've ever been able to communicate with (save doctors) who understand what I'm going through since I was diagnosed 10 years ago!"

"I only registered with Thirdaid last week so have little feed back to offer so far. I was contacted by a gentleman who had a similar condition to myself who recommended a product to relieve the discomfort of a dry mouth which I was unaware of.

I have since tried the product and found it to be as good as he said and have persuaded my GP to prescribe it. So thanks for setting up the site it has been very useful thus far."

*"Good idea for a website! I have a rare liver condition and had been registered a week when I heard from someone else who has it! So I have learnt a lot already!!
Thanks"*

"Hello, congratulations for a very interesting initiative! As a physician working in the Internet Dept. of a medical device company I was wondering how I could support your concept, as I believe the Internet is a wonderful communication tool for patients to share views in the field of healthcare. Best regards"

The interesting thing about ThirdAid.com is that the patients are already beginning to drive the focus of the site and this is what Sarah Frost thinks is most exciting:

“We had a plea for a transplant on the site; that message might reach users across the world. This is just one example of what ThirdAid can be used for - it opens up the possibilities somewhat.”

For ThirdAid, the next step is clear, but at this early stage it appears as if ThirdAid is going down well. For more information about ThirdAid.com please contact Sarah Frost via e-mail at: sarah@thirdaid.com

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