



Website is Expert Resource

A new website resource aims to help specialists build up their medico-legal practice. Mr Glyn Evans reviews www.macbeal.com

When I was asked to review MacBeal.com, I felt the best way was to test drive the site personally and find out how it could help me, as a medical expert, to market myself to solicitors. I was particularly interested in how the technology it has developed might facilitate this.

MacBeal.com is a clever combination of an expert directory, an online appointment booking system and an online document exchange system. It is essentially a booking system for solicitors intending to instruct medical experts, and a lot more besides.

A solicitor registered with MacBeal can log on to the site and upload their claimant's details and postcode, and then the type of medical expert required.

MacBeal.com then searches the clinic locations provided by the medical experts and lists those whose clinics are closest to the claimant and whose expertise matches that required.

Online booking

The solicitor can then access

detailed profiles of the experts listed, their CVs, terms and conditions and sample reports. The solicitor can also see which appointments are available in the clinics close to the claimant and book an appointment online.

Under the terms of the site, booking an appointment constitutes a contract between the solicitor and the doctor. This means the solicitor can send instructions via the MacBeal document exchange to the expert and the expert can send reports back to the solicitor.

Unlike emails, this document exchange system is secure and cannot be intercepted by any third party.

The site supplies a range of other services and is a one-stop shop for solicitors and medical experts. For example, the transcription service, which could be very useful if you had no secretarial support or wanted to save on typing costs.

However the real beauty of the system is in the way it brings experts and solicitors together, especially the online appointments booking.

Currently MacBeal.com is a Beta version. So I expected one or two minor faults. For example I found my date of birth was entered wrongly, as were the letters after my name.

There was also a minor problem with my CV. None of the difficulties I encountered were major and were soon put right by the helpline.

The easiest way of understanding MacBeal was through its online tutorial. I found this very informative and easy to understand for me and my secretary whose own username and password gives her restricted access to those parts of the system required by her role.

Helpline talk

Besides the tutorial, I also viewed the web pages online while talking with their helpline. The thing I liked about that was the fact that the person on the helpline not only understood MacBeal, but also had a grasp of medico-legal practice.

The site offers several other functions such as Report Manager, which keeps a record

of appointments booked and activity reports can be downloaded from this as a spreadsheet. This is going to be very helpful in keeping track of my medico-legal activities.

Having taken the test drive, it was extremely simple to introduce the website into my practice and the programme has not been at all difficult to use.


Anyone familiar with the internet will have no problems. One or two adjustments were needed in my working practices initially and it took a day or two to acquire full familiarity with the site. However, once I started using it, I wondered how I ever did without it.

As with everything, there is a cost. The registration process is quite lengthy and you have to provide a lot of information when signing up. This took between 30 minutes to an hour when I started using the site.

In the end this is well worthwhile. All the information requested does make sense and is maintained on a secure server, which is reassuring.

I like the fact that the initial three trial months are free. After that the monthly subscription fee on MacBeal is impressively low - £9.95 plus VAT and £1 plus VAT for each instruction received. I also like the fact that I can discontinue using MacBeal

anytime by giving two months' notice.

At this stage, I am still exploring the full functionality of MacBeal and I am sure there is more to discover. From my experience, it is an excellent service, a major innovation in the organisation of medico-legal practice and an outstandingly cost effective resource. 

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