Shepherd Center

increased patient referrals by 40% with Piwik PRO as their HIPAA-compliant analytics platform

Shepherd Center is a neurorehabilita-
tion hospital based in Atlanta, Georgia,
that specializes in treating individuals
recovering from spinal cord injury,
brain injury, multiple sclerosis, spine
and chronic pain, and other neuro-
muscular conditions. This family-
founded non-profit organization was
established to fill a gap in specialized
hospitals catering to neurorehabilita-
tion. Shepherd Center assists around
2,000 inpatients annually through its
comprehensive rehabilitation therapy
programs.

Looking for a HIPAA--compliant alternative to Google Analytics

In December 2022, the US Department
of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued
guidance on online tracking technology
to HIPAA-covered entities. It details
healthcare companies' use of third-party
cookies, pixels, and other tracking tech-
nologies and elaborates on the definition
of protected health information (PHI)
that HIPAA refers to.

Shepherd Center

Industry: Healthcare

Locations: Atlanta, Georgia

Highlights:

- Privacy-conscious and user-
  friendly design that addressed
  HIPAA requirements and guidance.

- Simplified privacy compliance and
  a secure data environment thanks
  to a built-in consent manager.

- Integrations with Looker Studio
  and Google Ads that enhanced
  data analysis and digital marketing
  efforts.

- Rebuilt patient referral page
  generated a 215% increase in page
  views, contributing to a 40%
  increase in online referrals.

Read more:

- **HHS guiadance on using online tracking technologies: How to make your analytics HIPAA-compliant**
- **PHI and PII: How they impact HIPAA compliance and your marketing strategy**

The proposed guidance prompted Shepherd Center to reassess its analytics tools. The expanded definition of PHI meant that the hospital needed to ensure its tracking technologies were HIPAA-compliant. Their previous choice, Google Analytics (GA), did not offer the possibility of signing a business associate agreement (BAA), making it an unsuitable option for the organization. This, along with the usability challenges introduced with Google Analytics 4 (GA4), drove their need to find an alternative.

„Google Analytics doesn't sign a BAA. They also lack transparency about where the data is stored and control over what data they collect. We also struggled with learning a new platform – it was challenging and not user-friendly. It truly impacted our ability to access the data analytics we wanted."

Kelsey Harris
Web Strategist at Shepherd Center

Shepherd Center evaluated several options, including Piwik PRO, Matomo and Freshpaint. Their priority was an intuitive interface and compliance with HIPAA guidelines.

Freshpaint wasn't quite the analytics platform Shepherd Center wanted, and even though Matomo meets HIPAA requirements, it offers limited cloud vs. on-premises data storage options. Ultimately, they decided Piwik PRO's competitive pricing, security, and transparency made it an ideal choice.

„Piwik PRO was already a privacy-first analytics platform and we really appreciated it. Even without the rules established by HIPAA for healthcare in the US, we'd still be looking for a platform like Piwik PRO because we want to use a platform that respects data privacy for our patients and users. The practice and the philosophy around privacy mattered to us."

Chris Walker
Director of Digital Strategy and Marketing at Shepherd Center

Shepherd Center chose Piwik PRO due to its robust features, which aligned with their needs. Key benefits that supported their choice were the platform's privacy--conscious design, which ensures secure data handling, HIPAA compliance, and a responsive development team that addresses new regulatory requirements.

A user-friendly solution that supported the company's traffic and website analytics needs

The implementation of Piwik PRO Analytics Suite on Shepherd Center's websites went seamlessly. Comprehensive onboarding sessions and a well-documented knowledge base supported the whole process. The onboarding experience significantly exceeded the one provided by Google Analytics, delivering personalized support and ensuring a smooth transition.

„I really liked how intuitive, easy, and familiar Piwik PRO felt compared to other platforms. We're a small in-house team, so not having to onboard into a new platform that would require a very steep learning curve was very helpful for us."

Chris Walker
Director of Digital Strategy and Marketing at Shepherd Center

Shepherd Center's small analytics team of three appreciated the platform's intuitive nature, which minimized the learning curve and ensured quick adoption. Also, Piwik PRO offered several features that were particularly valuable to them:

- **Tag Manager:** By implementing over 25 custom tags, they could more effectively track user navigation and understand the user experience.
- **Granular data:** They enjoyed the detailed insights, including video engagement metrics, which were more usable than the guidance from the Google team.
- **Consent Manager:** A built-in consent manager simplified compliance with privacy regulations and ensured a secure data environment.
- **Integrations:** Various integrations, especially with Looker Studio and Google Ads, enhanced their data analysis and digital marketing efforts.

In addition to the marketing team, other employees use Piwik PRO's capabilities to track how users interact with educational content, including downloading ebooks or adding products to the cart and gathering demographic data about the website's visitors.

The integration with Looker Studio was especially beneficial for Shepherd Center's education team. They could combine the historical analytics data from the previous platform with the information collected with Piwik PRO. This gave them a holistic view of all vital metrics and reporting styles that they could use in various presentations shown to clients.

Managing the website, educating users, and spreading awareness with a privacy-conscious analytics platform

The implementation of Piwik PRO delivered significant results, notably in patient engagement and user interaction analysis.

Over a two-month AB test of opt-in messaging options, Shepherd Center achieved an impressive 43% increase in the opt-in rate for tracking consent. This allowed them to gain valuable insights into user behavior, particularly regarding patient referrals.

„As part of our marketing objectives to drive patient referrals, we partnered with Piwik PRO to gain valuable insights into the user experience on our referral web pages and the referral process. After enhancing our on-page content, we saw a remarkable 215% increase in page views and a 79% drop in bounce rates, resulting in a 40% rise in online referrals. We have created more engaging content that is easier to navigate, making our website a better patient-centered referral experience.”

Kelsey Harris
Web Strategist at Shepherd Center

A way towards increased privacy-consciousness in healthcare

Piwik PRO met and exceeded Shepherd Center's expectations by providing a HIPAA-compliant, user-friendly analytics solution that supported the organization's traffic and website analysis needs.

The platform's ability to handle digital advertising data allowed Shepherd Center to manage awareness initiatives effectively, educating patients and their families about its services. Shepherd Center continues to rely on Piwik PRO's robust analytics to improve its online presence and patient engagement strategies.