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Are No-Show Rates Impacted When Automated Reminder Calls Feature a Clinician's Voice?

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Background

No show rates at LVPG- Family Health Center, a family medicine residency clinic, had an average no-show rate of 24% for FY 19. There are concerns from residents, especially at the start of their PG1 year, that low outpatient volume due to no-shows adversely impacts their education. With faculty changing to an RVU based comp model, there is concern regarding ability to meet contractual obligations with this rate.

On literature review, previous works have identified barriers such as: “participants did not feel obligated to keep a scheduled appointment in part because they felt disrespected by the health care system. The effect of this feeling was compounded by participants’ lack of understanding of the scheduling system.”¹

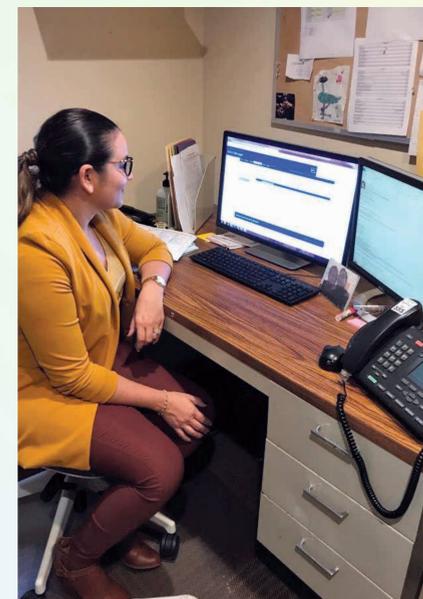
One third of residency clinics have no-show rates that exceed 20% despite use of reminder systems.¹

All but 2 practices (in another study) attempted to contact all patients within 24 to 48 hours of every appointment to remind them of the appointment. One practice administrator reported that “when a secretary, who had been telephoning all of the patients the day before their appointment, decided to stop doing so (without telling her supervisors), the no-show rate went from 5% to 10% within 1 week.”²

Logistic regression analysis found no significant relationship between no-show rates and free-text reports of telephoning to remind all patients, open-access scheduling, or patient dismissal for no-shows.²

The Family Health Center has a no-show policy, rolled out on May 19, 2019, which accounts for patient notification, telephone contact on same or next business day for all no-shows, documentation and tracking of no-shows, notification of PCP after 2 no-shows, recommendation to dismiss after 3 no-shows within 6 months. This intervention decreased no-show rate from 23% to 20%. An automated appointment reminder system has been in place for years, utilizing a standard, computer generated voice.

Intervention



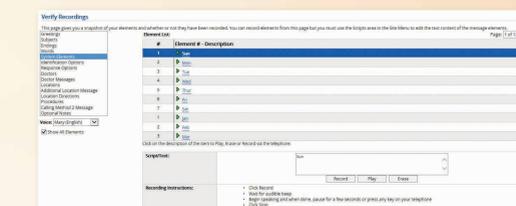
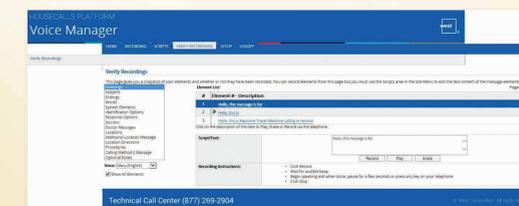
Two physicians in the office volunteered to be recorded into the Televox system so patients would hear a doctor's voice, rather than a computer generated voice, on their reminder call. Recordings were made in English and Spanish. Physician voice recordings took approximately 60 minutes to be used in the Televox system. There were several issues with recording and several re-recording sessions had to take place for individual elements. Go-Live for the new reminders was 10/18/19.

Results

2 weeks after Go-Live, both MSK and MG saw reductions in No-Show rates while control clinicians JS and JM saw no such reduction.

NO SHOW RATE	MSK	MG	JS	JM
FY19 Individual Average	23.80%	21.98%	26.62%	25.29%
FY20 YTD Individual Average	20.22%	20.31%	27.64%	20.80%
July 2019	15%	18%	23%	17%
Aug. 2019	20%	19%	20%	21%
Sept. 2019	14%	14%	22%	15%
Oct. 2019	21%	20%	29%	20%
Oct. 1–16, 2019	24%	23%	26%	13%
Oct. 17–31, 2019	17%	16%	32%	24%
Nov. 1–15, 2019	16%	19%	27%	26%

Rates remain within the variation expected for the year. Rates are reviewed every 2 weeks.



Discussion

Optimal education and maintaining a robust community clinic presence requires patients to show up. While technology can make patient reminder systems less cumbersome on office staff, they also remove the personal connection which patients say they want in their primary care offices. Combining the personal with the technological may help enhance the caring, relational aspect of the patient visit. There is an initial investment of clinician and admin time in collecting and reviewing the recordings.

References

- Why We Don't Come: Patient Perceptions on No-Shows. Naomi L. Lacy, PhD, Audrey Paulman, MD, MMM, Matthew D. Reuter, BA, and Bruce Lovejoy, MSN, APRN, FNP-C. Ann Fam Med. 2004 Nov; 2(6): 541–545.
- Reduction and Management of No-Shows by Family Medicine Residency Practice Exemplars. Bradley J. Johnson, MD, James W. Mold, MD, MPH, and J. Michael Pontious, MD. Ann Fam Med. 2007 Nov; 5(6): 534–539

LEFT: Examples of recordable elements in Televox