

Improve Communications. Deliver Better Care. Enhance the Patient Journey.

How consumer technologies can help reduce no shows and improve patient-provider communications

Healthcare providers are finding new ways to deliver better care to their patients, but they still face the challenge of cancelled appointments, no shows, and lack of patient readiness and adherence. In fact, a study showed that patient no-shows can take up to five slots when rebooking.¹

The Negative Impact of No Shows

Even the most efficient practices, with numerous back-up plans in place, can't account for patient forgetfulness. Asking highly-skilled staff to handle reminders or scramble to reschedule appointments monopolizes their time and affects the quality of care across the practice. For example, a practice with four missed appointments a day can end up losing \$144,000 in revenue a year—based on the average appointment cost of \$150.²

The Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) found that a contributing factor to no-shows is too much "lead time." The study found that no-shows for same-day appointments are about half the no-show rate for appointments made three weeks in advance. Additionally, the MGMA found that efficient practices have a daily no-show and last minute cancellation rate of 12%—while some experience a 50% no show rate.³ The Veterans Health Association found that new patients had a higher no-show rate than established patients, especially beyond a 36-day lead time.⁴

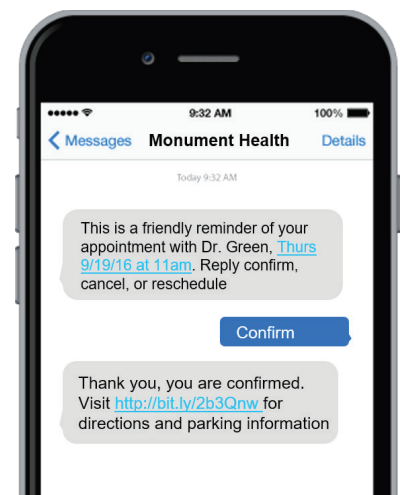
More Coordination Less Care

When patients don't show up for their appointments, other patients are affected too; and the quality of care they receive is negatively impacted. No shows are frustrating to providers since they prevent other patients from getting an appointment. Same day cancellations can have a particularly

adverse impact since patients needing urgent medical treatment, whether already at the facility or attempting to get an appointment.

Providers who have waiting list protocols to fill appointments still risk that their staff will make duplicate scheduling calls, double book and accidentally skip over patients who are on the waiting-list. In addition, this rescheduling scramble prevents staff from focusing on their core duties, such as greeting and checking-in patients, answering questions, and providing physicians and nurses with waiting room updates. A recent 2017 study by Merrit Hawkins found that patients wait an average of 24 days to schedule an appointment with their doctor.⁵

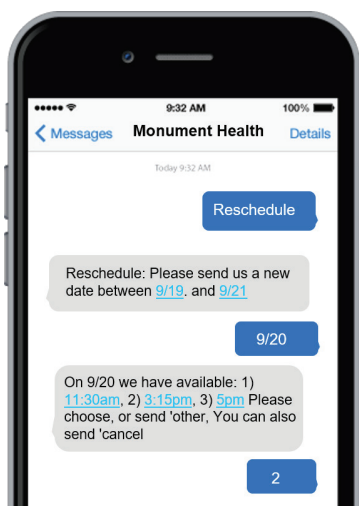
A common practice to alleviate issues is to overcompensate for no shows by overscheduling. Unfortunately, this tactic can hurt more than it helps because it leads to extended wait times which reduces patient satisfaction.



According to Family Medicine, missed appointments compromises the continuity and quality of care for no-show patients and others who would have been scheduled. The same study found that patients who miss appointments tend to rely on emergency rooms for routine primary care appointments and chronic condition management, which strains the resources and staff of those facilities and hospitals.⁶

Problems of Nonadherence

Showing up for an appointment is only part of the equation. Healthy outcomes depend upon patient readiness and adherence to their treatment regimens. Nonadherence can be detrimental to the health and wellbeing of the patient and their families. An NCBI study found that more than 40% of patients face significant risks by misunderstanding, forgetting and ignoring healthcare advice. One of the contributing factors to non-adherence is the lack of communication between the provider and patient.⁷



An *Annals of Internal Medicine* study

reported that non-adherence deaths for medication stand at 125,000 per year, and contribute to 10% of all hospitalizations. But, nonadherence affects more than just a patient's quality of life—also, it puts a strain on resources. Nonadherence means an increase in

readmissions and ER visits, which prevents other patients from getting treated. The same report found that 41% of patients don't fully understand the ramifications of missing an appointment.⁸

Every patient is different when it comes to chronic disease management and treatment. It is important for providers to be aware of each patient's risk factors so they can intervene before things escalate and become an emergency situation.

Digital Channels – Encourage Better Patient-Provider Relationships

If providers want to communicate with patients they need to use channels that patients are comfortable with, such as SMS or mobile—or they won't take action and follow directions.

The patient-provider relationship is a sacred one and it will ONLY succeed if there is mutual collaboration and that means patients must play a role in managing their own treatment.

Appointment Reminders

By leveraging SMS, providers can automatically send appointment reminders to patients. Some providers rely heavily on email; but studies show that email only has a 20% open rate, compared to SMS that has a 98% open rate.⁹ SMS is much more efficient than live staff calls because it doesn't strain resources. A Forrester study showed that voice can cost several dollars per interaction, whereas SMS costs just pennies to the dollar.¹⁰ By implementing SMS reminders, providers will see an immediate ROI.

SMS can be used for more than just appointment reminders. By integrating SMS solutions with EHR or CRM platforms, patients can confirm or cancel their appointment within the same reminder or notification. Secure hyperlinks can be included in the message connecting them to secure portals or disposable apps that enable them to reschedule and access info about upcoming appointments within the same SMS session.

An Accenture study found that it takes less than one minute to schedule a medical appointment online—whereas it can take an average of 8 minutes over the phone, and 63% of the time is wasted on call transfers from one staff member to another. The same study found that patients who receive confirmation and reminder messages (text, voice or email) are up to 5 times more likely to show up for their scheduled appointment.¹¹

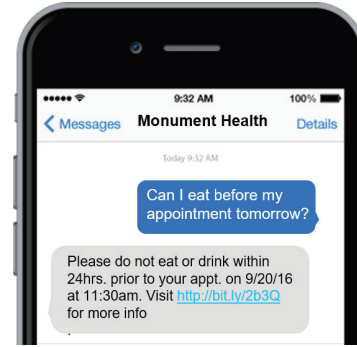
Keep Patients Out of the Hospital-Communication on Their Terms

SMS can also play a key role in helping patients manage their health and staying on track with their treatment plans. Reminders that include pre-appointment instructions such as "not to eat within 24 hours of the appointment" could help patients properly prepare and thereby reduce the chance of needing to reschedule.

SMS reminders can encourage medication adherence and outpatient treatment too. In fact, a study found that 98% of patients found SMS reminders easy to use and over 60% found them useful.¹²

SMS interactions give patients flexibility to interact with their providers and access information through a channel they feel comfortable with and use in their daily lives. Improving

the communications between patients and providers means patients will be more likely to seek regular, preventative treatment for chronic conditions, access information such as pre-appointment instructions and adherence guidance so they improve their home care, reduce the likelihood of being readmitted and live better lives.



1. <http://www.fortcarsonmountaineer.com/2015/11/hospital-no-shows-affect-all/>
2. <http://www.physicianspractice.com/pearls/stop-losing-money-no-shows>
3. <http://www.medicalpracticeinsider.com/best-practices/one-way-solve-no-show-problem>
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12. <http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/5/11/e008574>

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