



Five Ways to Improve Patient Recall



One of the biggest challenges for healthcare organization, large and small, is managing patient recalls, which affect not only your schedule but also your bottom line. No healthcare organization wants to lose revenue, and having an effective recall strategy is critical to financial success. Although patient recall is one of the most overlooked elements of practice management, when done efficiently, it can generate more revenue and keep your schedule full.

Long gone are the days of relying on postcards and manually calling patients about missed or unscheduled appointments. However, many healthcare organizations are still relying on postcards and/or phone calls as the primary patient touchpoints. Not only is direct mail costly, guaranteeing its effectiveness is nearly impossible - especially since it takes multiple mailings before the message resonates with the patient receiving them. There is also high risk that your postcard will end up in the junk mail pile or recycle bin. In addition, using office staff to make patient calls can be even more challenging with limited time to call each patient, and hiring a single patient services coordinator could cost the practice an average of \$16 an hour, or nearly \$40,000 a year.¹

The cost of direct mail continues to increase, placing a heavy burden on resources.



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each year.

Leaving it up to patients to adhere to treatment guidelines or be proactive with scheduling preventive screening appointments is risky. Studies show that patients simply don't plan for these types of appointments in advance.² For many, their busy schedule prevents them from knowing their availability that far into the future and inevitably they forget to call and schedule when it's time for their next appointment.

With each 60-minute physician appointment valued at \$200 on average, unused time slots are costing the U.S. healthcare system \$150 billion each year.³

Proactive recall reminders delivered via automated text, calls and email messages allow you to conveniently and efficiently reach out to patients to schedule future appointments. As mobile device usage increases, healthcare providers are missing the mark if they do not take advantage of automated messaging. This technology allows your staff the ability to communicate with your patients more efficiently, while still providing them with a personalized message from your office.

What are the Key Components of a Successful Recall Strategy?

1 Proactively Reach Out to Your Patients

Schedule time to actively look for patients who need a recall - if your PMS doesn't already do this for you. You can also work with your patient engagement solution team to create workflows that further automate the process, sending text messages automatically when patients fail to schedule, or miss, an appointment. Committing to communicating with these patients will lead to a healthier patient population and can save your healthcare organization thousands of dollars in potential revenue.

To maximize the effectiveness of a recall communication, identify groups of patients who are overdue for specific care services, such as mammograms, and make the content of the message specific to those patients.

2 Always Assume

You've heard the saying about why you should never assume. In this case, it's the opposite. Crafting a message with the assumption that the patient simply didn't have the opportunity to schedule an appointment demonstrates your confidence in knowing what's best for their health. Here's an example of an SMS message:

Hello, this is Dr. Thompson's office. Routine mammograms are critical for detecting breast cancer early. Our records indicate you may need to schedule a mammogram. Please press "1" to be connected now to our scheduling team. Press "2" to request a call back from your provider's office, or press "3" to decline.

3 Create A Sense of Urgency

Making patients feel as though their appointment is important gives them a reason to move forward and overcome inertia. Create friendly and inviting messaging that will prompt them to take action. Communications should clearly state what action you wish the patient to take. Here's an example of an automated phone message:

"This is a friendly reminder from Hart Health that it is time to receive your annual flu vaccine. This vaccine provides the best protection against the flu, so that you can stay happy and healthy during the colder months, and enjoy more time with friends and family. Please call 855-555-1212 to schedule your appointment or to discuss any questions you may have with your provider."



4 Remember the Long Overdue Patient

Do you have patients who you haven't seen in a year or more? You could be sitting on an untapped goldmine of recall revenue. This is an essential part of financial health for all healthcare organizations. While referrals are great, the easiest patients to motivate are the inactive ones. They already know you. Imagine if you contacted 150 inactive patients who then scheduled an appointment for a routine checkup. You could be looking at over \$18,000 in extra revenue. How many inactive patients do you have?

Conservatively, you could generate more than **\$18,000** per patient/annually in extra revenue.



5 Show Them You Care

Nurturing relationships with your patients is an important part of maintaining and growing a healthy patient population. At any moment, an unhappy patient could share their opinion with the masses through social media. Showing patients that you genuinely care for their well-being establishes trust and makes them more likely to respond to messaging and return for future appointments.

Since 7 of 10 patients indicate they would like more communication from their healthcare provider between appointments, reach out! Here are a few ways to show your patients you care.

- Automate outreach in the patient's preferred language.
- Use positive, succinct verbiage that encourages engagement.
- Send educational messages via SMS about wellness and preventative care and provide links that patients can view when they have time.
- Make scheduling easy. Consider automating EHR embedded, closed-loop scheduling via SMS.
- Make the requested action clear, and ALWAYS provide a way for the patient to contact their provider with questions.

Sources:

1. PayScale, Patient Services Coordinator Salary, https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Patient_Services_Coordinator/Hourly_Rate
2. American Public Health Association, Primary Care: Is There Enough Time for Prevention, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1447803/>
3. Health Management Technology, Missed appointments cost the U.S. healthcare system \$150B each year, May 2017

