

## **Preliminary Experience with Text-Message Reminder Service for Ambulatory Patients**

Kira Lundin, Michael Vestergaard Thomsen, Christian Bonde, Helle Klyver

Rigshospitalet Copenhagen University Hospital, Blegdamsvej 9, Copenhagen OE, Denmark

Tel: +45 40560727

[kira.lundin@dadlnet.dk](mailto:kira.lundin@dadlnet.dk);

No-shows and cancelled appointments are a major source of wasted resources in the ambulatory setting. The aim of this study was to describe the patient-population with high incidence of non-appearance (NA) or cancellation and evaluate the effect of a text-message reminder service. Data from our outpatient clinic in the period 01.01.2011 – 31.11.2012 were analyzed. The text-message reminder service became available from December 2011. This service require patients to log on to their individual health- and public service profiles to register their cellphone. Since summer 2012, all patients were systematically introduced to this concept using pamphlets in their appointment letters and posters in the hospital areas. A group of students were hired to assist patients in the registration process. During the 23-months period, there was 31650 available timeslots. Six percent were registrated as NA (n= 1921) and 5% were timeslots with cancelled appointments (n=1520) . Another 5% were unbooked timeslots. The rate of actual consultations was 82% (n= 26057). The highest incidence of NA was the age group 20-25 years, with 18% NA for males and 11% for females. Generally a high rate of NA was seen in the age from 15 – 50, with a range of 8-18% for males and 5-11% for females. In jan – nov 2011 the average incidence of NA was 8 % for males and 5% for females. In jan - nov 2012 this was 7% for males and unchanged for females. In theory, a text-message reminder service could lead to a significant reduction in NA among young adults and it might also have an effect on cancellations. However, there was no major benefit from providing a text-message reminder system in this study. This may be due to seasonal variations and the lag-effect from registration until next ambulatory appointment. It could also be caused by a low percentage of patients registering for the text-message reminder system. This on-going study showed that merely providing a text-message reminder service does not cause a major decrease in cancellations and NA in the short run. We believe that an effort to effectively implement the text-message reminder service must be also be initiated.

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