

Reducing '*Did Not Attend (DNA)*' appointments in General Practice

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NHSE research indicates that non-attendance of appointments (Did Not Attend) is a complex issue, there are many different reasons why patients fail to keep appointments. They are influenced by demographics, administrative and relational factors.

- Non attendance of appointments impacts on practices and can cause serious delays in treatment for patients
- Reducing DNAs is important for improving access and helping practices make the best of Clinicians time
- Practices spend a lot of time checking reason behind each missed appointment in terms of mental health, safeguarding issues or other welfare concerns about patients

Cost of DNAs to the NHS

NHS England's GP Forward View – is promising £2.4bn extra a year for general practice and 5,000 more for GPs to deliver care that patients need, whatever their circumstances, and wherever in the country they live.

In 2014, NHS England estimated that more than 12 million GP visits were missed each year in the UK which cost the health service in excess of £162m per year.

A further 6.9 million outpatient hospital appointments are missed each year in the UK, costing an average of £108 per appointment.

Study of 500,000 people in England:

- Poorer patients living in affluent areas were the most likely to miss an appointment
- The patients tended to be aged 16 to 30, or older than 90
- The study found 19% of patients missed more than two appointments in a three-year period
- Appointments that were booked two or three days in advance were more likely to be missed than those made two weeks in advance
- Social deprivation was the biggest predictor

Solutions:

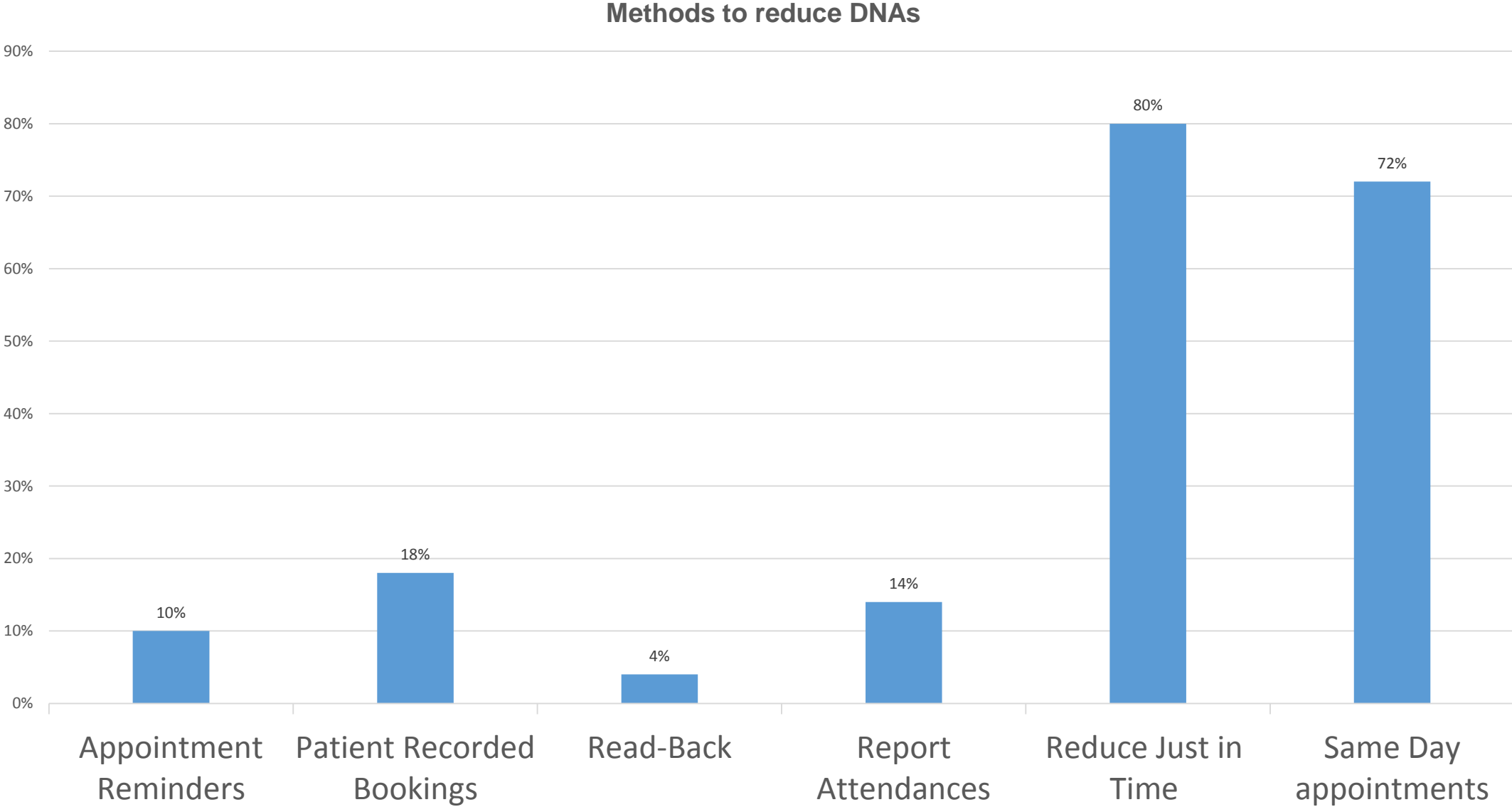
- Practices learning to better manage patients who are more likely to not attend
- More appointments available on the day than two to three days in advance
- NHS to consider the younger population, as a consumer service and make the appointment system fit into patient's lives more easily

Schemes to Reduce DNAs

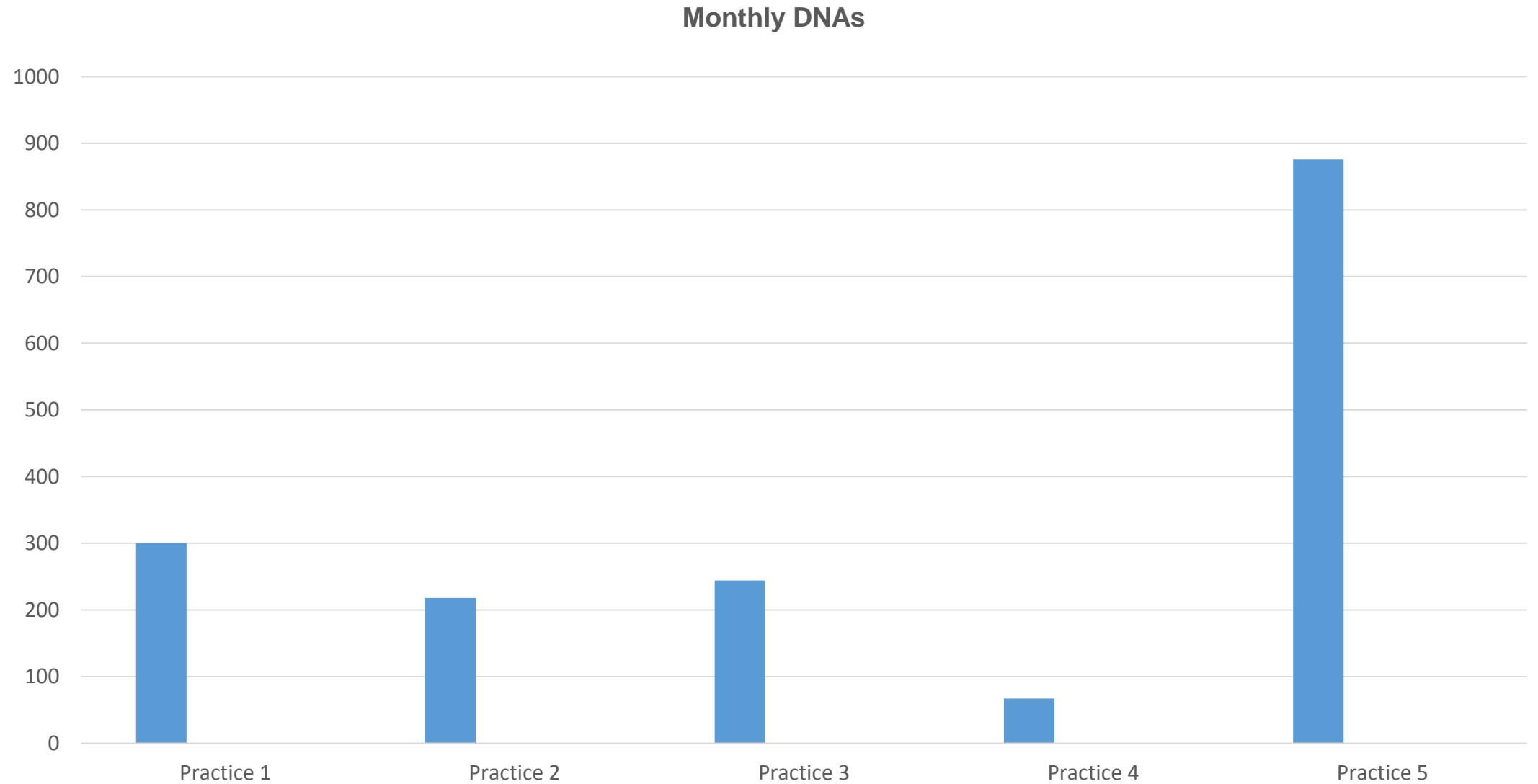
GP practices across the country are already implementing schemes to reduce DNAs:

- Text message reminders
- Patient Education and awareness posters detailing the consequences of a patient not attending
- Online services which allow patients to check, book and cancel appointments at their own convenience and order repeat medication online
- Doctors are also making the most of the rise of smartphones and tablets to connect with patients: with outpatient consultations via Skype.
- Telecare and telehealth services so patients can monitor their health at home and access medical advice without regular visits to their surgery.

Methods to reduce DNAs

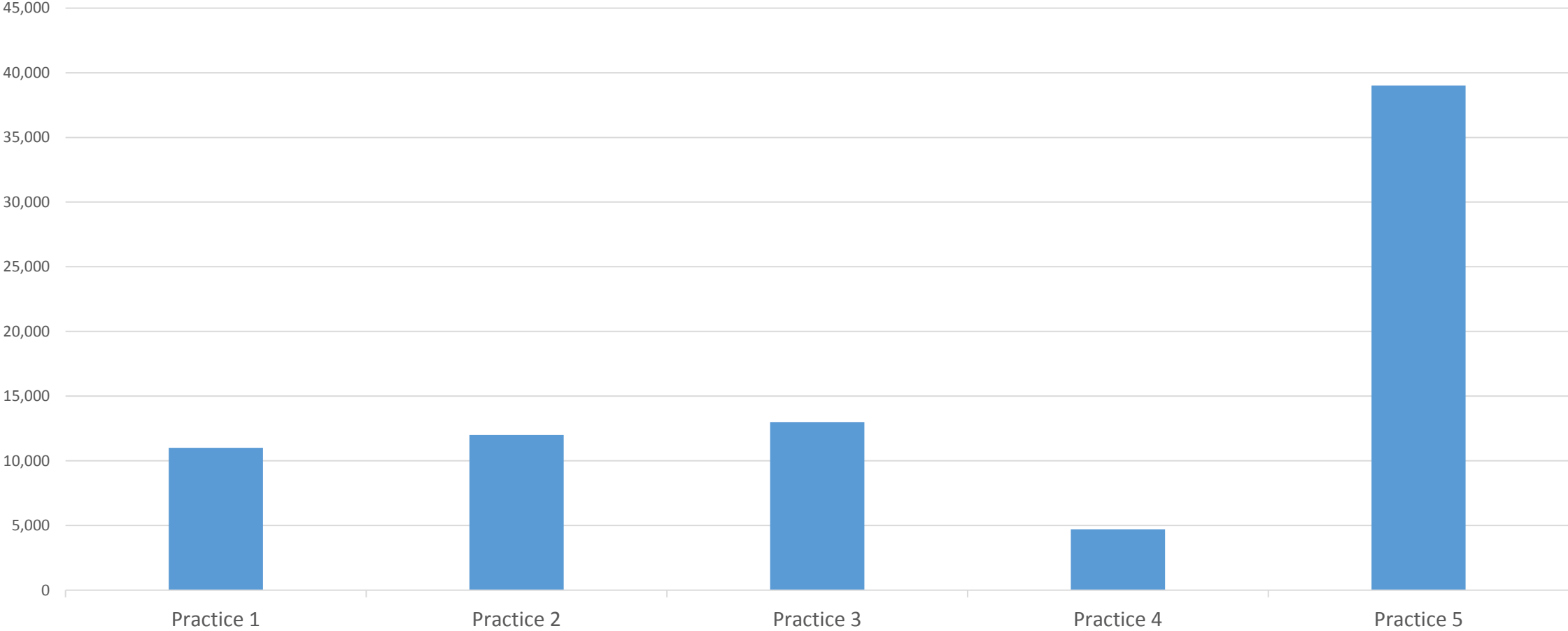


Wandle Practices DNAs (2017)



Wandle Practices DNAs (2017)

List size



Research Trial for Text messages- Barts NHS Trust

A research trial was completed by Barts NHS Trust and a NHS text message provider iPlato.

Approximately 20,000 patients at 5 clinics at Barts were randomly assigned 1 of a number of different reminder messages for their appointments and the reminders were sent 5 days before their appointment date. One reason patients may miss their appointment is that they forget.

There is evidence shows that, telephone or text message reminders substantially reduce missed appointments. Research shows that small changes to messages can have a substantial impact on how people respond. This research was conducted to test how different reminder messages affect missed appointment rates.

Trial 1 (November to December 2013)

This compared the existing standard reminder message in use at Barts with 3 new messages designed by the research team. Examples are shown in table 1.

| Message | Wording |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Control | Appt at [clinic] on [date] at [time]. To cancel or rearrange call the number on your appointment letter. |
| Easy Call | Appt at [clinic] on [date] at [time]. To cancel or rearrange call 02077673200. |
| Social Norms | We are expecting you at [clinic] on [date] at [time]. 9 out of 10 people attend. Call 02077673200 if you need to cancel or rearrange. |
| Specific Costs | We are expecting you at [clinic] on [date] at [time]. Not attending costs NHS £160 approx. Call 02077673200 if you need to cancel or rearrange. |

Trial 2

Trial 2 compared 3 new messages against the ‘specific costs’ message. The ‘specifics costs’ message remained the most effective (a missed appointments rate of 8.2%). It is interesting to note that a more general message about waste – the ‘general costs’ message – was less effective than the ‘specific costs’ message.

| Message | Wording |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Specific Costs | We are expecting you at [clinic] on [date] at [time]. Not attending costs NHS £160 approx. Call 02077673200 if you need to cancel or rearrange. |
| General Costs | We are expecting you at [clinic] on [date] at [time]. Not attending wastes NHS money. Call 02077673200 if you need to cancel or rearrange. |
| Empathy | We are expecting you at [clinic] on [date] at [time]. Please be fair to others waiting and call 02077673200 if you need to cancel or rearrange. |
| Recording | We are expecting you at [clinic] on [date] at [time]. Please attend or call 02077673200 to cancel/rearrange, or we will record as a missed appt. |

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Results

Trial Two replicates the Specific Costs result from Trial One, in that it produces a DNA rate 8.2%, similar to the result from the previous trial 1,

- London sees higher DNA rates than other parts of the UK, the best-performing message produced a DNA rate of 8.2%, which is below the 9.3% average rate for England.
- Healthcare providers using SMS technology to reduce DNAs should consider adopting the Specific Costs messages, or testing their own wordings.
- Practices should ensure messages contain specific, clear information in order to maximise their effectiveness. If the 160 character limit of the text message is not exceeded, then practice will pay no additional cost for the change.
- There are several limitations for NHS outpatient appointments as patients may not update their contact details.
- This could make a huge difference in reducing DNAs in General practice as mobile phone records are easily updated.

NHS Advice

What can the Patients do to lower DNA rates in their Practices and Hospitals?

Take this information and inform your Practice Managers and Patient groups.

Patient care is always at the top of the NHS agenda. That's why we are doing everything we can to make our services match with people's lifestyles and the technology they use, to give more easy access to the services they need. The public will need to do their part by making sure they attend appointments or cancel in good time. That way, everybody benefits."

NHS England.

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