



3 Reduce DNAs

Reducing DNAs in general practice

Non-attendance of appointments is a common problem, with an impact on practices and patients themselves. Reducing DNAs ('did not attend') is important for improving access and helping practices make best use of clinicians' time.

The idea(s)

The research indicates that non-attendance of appointments is a complex issue, that there are different reasons why patients fail to keep appointments, and that they are influenced by demographic, administrative and relational factors. Practices may therefore want to take action on more than one front in order to reduce DNAs.

3.1 Easy cancellation

Rapid access is provided for patients who wish to contact the practice to cancel an appointment. Common approaches include having a dedicated phone number, a text message service and online cancellation functionality.

3.2 Appointment reminders

Patients are sent a text message to remind them about a forthcoming appointment. A reminder is included about how to cancel the appointment if it is no longer wanted. This can reduce DNAs by up to 10%.

[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22786507].

3.3 Patient-recorded bookings

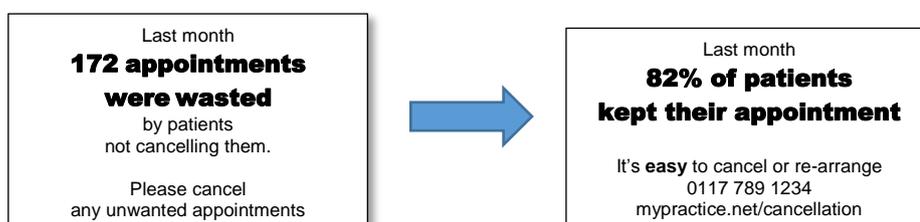
Patients are supported to write their own appointment card for their next appointment, rather than having it done for them. This encourages recall, and can reduce DNAs by 18%. [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3308641]

3.4 Read-back

The patient is asked to repeat the details of the appointment back, to check they have remembered it correctly. On its own, this has been shown to reduce DNAs by 4%. [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3308641]

3.5 Report attendances

The practice publishes information, for example in the practice waiting room, about the proportion of patients who do keep their appointment, with an encouragement to cancel unwanted appointments. On its own this has been shown to reduce DNAs by 14%. [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3308641]

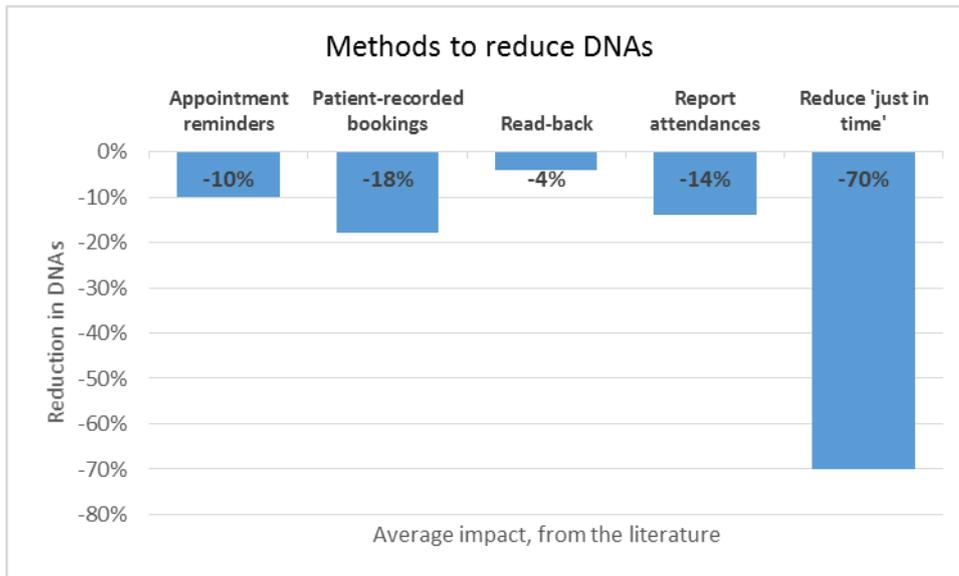


3.6 Reduce 'just in case' booking

Creating an appointment system and booking experience which is straightforward and responsive, giving patients confidence that they will be able to obtain help when they need it. This can reduce booking of appointments a long way in advance, which is associated with a much higher DNA rate. Practices who have worked with GP Access Ltd to change to a demand-led appointment system have had an 80% reduction in DNAs. Practices in the Modality Partnership in Birmingham introduced same-day telephone appointments and saw a reduction of 72% [www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/pmcf-innv-shcse-2-tech.pdf].

Implementation tips

Combine more than one of these for best effect. For example, combining innovations 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 has been shown to reduce DNAs by 32% [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3308641].



For patient-recorded bookings and read-back, hold a short training session with staff, to explain the reason for this change and the evidence behind it. Give them an opportunity to practice asking someone to read back the information about an appointment (it usually feels unnatural at first).

For reporting attendance, most experts believe it is important to ensure the information is kept up to date. Try putting information on the practice website as well as in the waiting room.