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Patient No Shows: A Costly Impact That Can be Minimized

Automated Patient Reminder Message System – Make every patient count!

By Stephen M. Soll, M.D., F.A.C.S.

Patient “no shows” can have a tremendous negative impact on a practice of any size. Keeping the “no show” rate under control translates into office staff efficiency, improved health care, patient satisfaction, and last but not certainly least, increased practice revenues.

Studies have established that patient reminder calls decrease office no-show rates increasing overall office productivity and increase revenue. Office personnel time can be utilized efficiently, rather than being wasted performing this task. An automated system can make patient reminder calls after business hours, or at whatever time you determine is best for your practice population.

Patient reminder calls made by an automated system are customized to include the patient’s name and treating physician, the applicable office location and any requisite special instructions.

A human voice delivers the reminder message, rather than a computer digitized voice. The automated system is answering machine/voice-mail compatible.

The amount of call attempts and times at which calls are made are customized to suit your practice’s needs. The auto-recall system generates a log documenting the number of patients called and the outcome. The system can be programmed not to call any patient who does not wish to be called, in compliance with HIPAA requirements.


Automated patient appointment reminder calls have dramatically reduced our patient no-show rates. At our Ophthalmology residency program at Cooper Hospital/UMDNJ in New Jersey, we had significant clinic no-show rates. The automatic reminder system changed that. Aside from dealing with a clinic population, many patients are Spanish speaking, making follow-up care even more difficult. After installing an automated recall system that was bilingual our no-show rate dropped dramatically, which translated into a greater volume of patients for our resident education both clinically and surgically. After seeing its success, we began using the system in our four other offices in the Philadelphia area. We experienced similar results. The system paid for itself within the first two months. We were also able to stop sending costly patient reminder cards. With medical reimbursements constantly decreasing, every patient encounter counts.

There are many different automated telephone (telephony) systems available. After researching many systems and their features, I found that the PAM2000 (American Telephony, LLC) was the best suited for our practice. Times change and we decided to implement technology to keep up with them. As a result, we have greater staff efficiency.

In addition to patient reminders, we easily programmed the system to remind patients to pick up their eyeglass and contact lens orders. This took a tremendous load off of the opticians who did not have the time to make these calls.

You can extrapolate the benefits: for example, if you have an active database of 20,000 patients that are seen once every 12 months, however return in 15 months due to poor patient recall, over a five-year period, based on 20,000 patients there would be 20,000 more appointments. You can do some simple math to estimate how much additional revenue this would generate. This does not take into account the better health care that is provided to the patient as well.

To learn more about this service, please call (888) 275-0703 or visit their website at www.PAM2000.com.



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