Strategies to Reduce Primary Care No-Show Rates and Improve Health Equity

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NR.210.889 Evaluation and Dissemination

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On my honor, I pledge that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this paper. April 9, 2023, Chris Malagrida

Abstract

Background and Purpose: This quality improvement project sought to reduce no-shows for primary care patients who identify as Black. Gaps in care because of no-shows cause worsening of chronic diseases, increased frequency of emergency department visits, and increased hospitalizations.

Methods: A pre-post design project at an urban community health center in the northeast United States measured both the no-show rate, before and after patients received scripted live reminder calls, and the results of a patient satisfaction survey question about communication.

Results: Results showed a slight reduction in no-shows and a statistically insignificant increase in patient satisfaction scores.

Conclusion: Asking patients about barriers to keeping appointments may help to identify and address social determinants of health that may be interfering with patients' access to care. Continuing with blanket automated reminders will result in harmful gaps in care for Black patients leading to poorer outcomes compared to their White peers.

Implications: Practices need to rethink their universal approach to appointment reminders and instead tailor the most preferable and efficacious appointment reminder method to specific segments of their patient population. In addition, more studies that evaluate interventions focused on the reasons why Black patients disproportionately no-show is needed to improve health equity and reduce disparities.

Keywords: health equity, no-show, primary care, reminder calls, appointment reminders