Reducing Missed Appointments in Chronic Disease Management

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Missed appointments place a significant burden on the outcome of patient care. For patients with chronic conditions, managing multiple appointments can be challenging. The financial impact, estimated at €200 per missed appointment[2], underscores the need for effective solutions. To address this issue, a quality improvement project was conducted across Podiatry services in two Chronic Disease Management hubs in HSE Dublin and Midlands region to reduce missed appointment rates through targeted interventions.

METHOD

A retrospective analysis was conducted over a 7-month period, comprising of a 5-month control phase followed by two consecutive 1-month intervention phases.

February–June 2024 Patients received a standard text reminder 2 days before their appointment

Patients received a phone call 1 working day prior to their appointment to confirm attendance.

Patients received a letter 1 week prior to their appointment to confirm attendance

RESULTS

Overall, both phone and letter interventions markedly reduced missed appointments during the intervention periods with differing success between hubs.

Missed Appointment Rate % Before and During Intervention Periods

	Control Period	Intervention 1 - Phone calls (% difference)	Intervention 2 - Letters (% difference)
HUB A	25.16%	19.4% (-23%)	10.69% (-58%)
HUB B	19.40%	9.64% (-50%)	20.93% (+8%)
Overall (A&B)	**22%**	**14.52% (-35%)**	**15.81% (-29%)**

LIMITATIONS

- The implementation of Intervention 2 in Hub B was limited by staff annual leave, which may have affected the results.
- The project was conducted without external support, which may have constrained intervention capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Extend the analysis period and include more clinicians to strengthen the findings.
- Introduce additional administrative support to facilitate the design and execution of interventions.
- Conduct further research to identify patterns of missed appointments, allowing for more cost-effective and targeted solutions.
- Undertake a full cost-benefit analysis.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the potential of tailored interventions to significantly reduce missed appointments in chronic disease management hubs. While phone calls proved effective in both locations, letters were highly impactful only in Hub A. These findings suggest the need for location-specific strategies to improve resource utilisation and patient outcomes.

1. Staff Grade Podiatrist, HSE Dublin and Midlands.
2. Healthcare Pricing Office, (2024). ‘Outpatients in ABF’. Available on: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://hpowp.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/ABF_2024_12_Slides_Lorna_Collins-1.pdf