



Phone messaging increases attendance at healthcare appointments

Clinical question

How effective are mobile phone messaging reminders for attendance at healthcare appointments?

Bottom line

There was moderate quality evidence that mobile phone text-messaging reminders were more effective than no reminders, and low quality evidence that text-messaging reminders with postal reminders were more effective than postal reminders alone. Text-messaging reminders were similar to telephone reminders in terms of their effect on attendance rates, and were more cost-effective than telephone reminders.

Caveat

The studies were heterogeneous and the quality of the evidence was low to moderate. None of the studies reported on health outcomes, user evaluation of the interventions, user perceptions of safety, costs or potential harms, or on any adverse effects of the interventions.

Context

Missed appointments are a major cause of inefficiency in healthcare delivery, with substantial monetary costs for the health system, leading to delays in diagnosis and appropriate treatment. Patients' forgetfulness is one of the main reasons for missed appointments, and reminders may help alleviate this problem. Mobile phone messaging applications could provide an important, inexpensive delivery medium for reminders for healthcare appointments.

Cochrane Systematic Review

Car J et al. Mobile phone messaging reminders for attendance at healthcare appointments. *Cochrane Reviews*, 2012, Issue 7. Article No. CD007458. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007458.pub2. *This review contains four studies involving 3547 participants.*

PEARLS No. 366, August 2012, written by Brian R McAvooy

PEARLS are succinct summaries of Cochrane Systematic Reviews for primary care practitioners – developed by the Cochrane Primary Care Field, New Zealand Branch of the Australasian Cochrane Centre at the Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care, University of Auckland and funded by the Ministry of Health. New Zealanders can access the Cochrane Library free via www.cochrane.org.nz

PEARLS provide guidance on whether a treatment is effective or ineffective. PEARLS are prepared as an educational resource and do not replace clinician judgement in the management of individual cases. View PEARLS online at: www.nzdoctor.co.nz; www.cochranepriarycare.org

