

Automated Appointment Reminders Reduce No-Shows and Labor Costs

TELEVOX SOLUTIONS



Since implementing TeleVox Appointment Reminders in February 2009, Howard University has experienced sustained success in connecting with patients about their appointments and maximizing the resources available to deliver these communications. Valencia Freeman, Manager of the Patient Access Center for Howard University, notes that three distinct benefits have established an automated system as the most effective way to reach patients with appointment notifications. These benefits include:

1. Cost of automation vs. manual staff outreach
2. Consistent delivery to each patient
3. Positive impact on patient no-show rate

LOWERED OUTREACH COST

Freeman notes that adopting an automated solution to contact patients has resulted in significant savings over the FTE costs associated with manual calls from the staff. In an attempt to deliver appointment notifications to a patient base that covers 180 physicians, Freeman estimates that five FTEs were each spending four hours a day delivering these calls, while being paid overtime wages for their efforts. Staff labor costs for this manual outreach averaged \$9,240 each month, leading to an annual investment of \$110,880 for routine appointment notifications.

CONSISTENT PATIENT COMMUNICATION

As more healthcare organizations adopt automated solutions for appointment notifications, year-round wellness outreach, past due balance reminders and more, patients have grown to expect these communications from their providers. While Howard's FTEs spent long hours attempting to contact patients about appointments, these calling efforts were often left incomplete due to other obligations or time constraints. By trusting these notifications to West, messages are consistently delivered to each patient well ahead of their scheduled visit.

- Eliminated \$110,880 of FTE costs for manual phone outreach
- Reduced existing patient no-show rate by 48%
- Established consistent delivery of appointment notifications to patient



REDUCED PATIENT NO-SHOW RATE

After West implementation, the positive impact of consistent appointment reminder delivery was immediately realized in the patient no-show rate. Freeman reports a no-show rate of 35% before West implementation. Since shifting to the automated outreach strategy, no-shows have plummeted to a yearly average of 18.3%, representing a 48% reduction of the pre-West no-show rate.

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Valencia Freeman,
Manager, Patient Access Center

While the retained revenue from these newly kept appointments varies greatly per provider, overall appointment volume figures indicate that this reduced no-show rate helps Howard retain 25,000-40,000 appointments annually, resulting in a multi-million dollar annual revenue impact.

“We expected a gradual improvement in no-show rates, due to our need for educating patients about the system and their acclimation period for this new appointment communication process,” says Freeman. “But the cost savings were immediate, and the no-show rate was quickly cut in half also. We couldn't be happier with the results of adopting TeleVox Appointment Reminders.”

Beyond pre-appointment outreach, the Howard team has now also added in notifications to patients who have recently missed their appointment in an attempt to get them rescheduled and realize the care opportunity. Freeman reports that early results have been encouraging.

“The sooner we catch our no-show patients, the better chance we have of getting them back in,” says Freeman. “The immediacy of the West technology is a perfect fit.”