

Customer Case Story: Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust

Background	Objective	Results
30,000 DNAs annually	Reduce DNAs rapidly and cost-effectively	Almost immediate DNA reduction of 35%
Annual DNAs equivalent to loss of 1,500 clinics	Maximise consultant, doctor and nurse time by back-filling cancellations	Net gain of 415 clinics per year
NHS requirements of 18 week maximum from referral to consultant-led treatment	Maintain and exceed 18 week targets	Trust able to accelerate treatment for waiting-list outpatients
NHS DNA ranking "average"	Improve ranking, manage DNAs and back-fill new vacant appointment times	Trust elevated into the NHS' top 25-percentile group
Staff telephoned a maximum of 100 outpatients each day to remind them of upcoming appointments as and when time allowed	Relieve pressure on administrative and nursing staff by automatic text-based appointment reminders 200,000—250,000 outpatients per year	Pre-planning set up of messages: 50% of outpatients receive 2 reminder texts 7 days and 24 hours in advance 100,000 healthcare messages sent in 2013
Requirement for automated and cost-efficient outpatient appointment reminder system	Trust wished to trial text-based messaging system before commitment	Free trial implemented, where the MJog solution exceeded expectations
Patient data security	Compliance with governance, confidentiality and best practice mandates Safeguard patient information against unauthorised access	Implementing MJog on a separate server and transferring specific patient data on a daily basis safeguarded information and enabled text reminders to be sent automatically
Messaging options	To test delivery of outpatient communications via SMS	Over 100,000 healthcare messages sent in 2013. PAH evaluating Voice messaging
Cost savings/Benefits	Achieve substantial cost and time savings Free up nurse and administrative staff to focus on core responsibilities	Net profit of 35 clinics a month From 100 telephone reminders a day to 8,000+ manual and automatic text reminders a month
	Substantial DNA reduction	Almost immediate DNA reduction of 35%
	Improved patient experience	Improved Patient Access through patient's preferred method of communication Potential use includes Friends and Family, and notification of specific campaigns
	Reduce pressure on reception	Staff time freed up

Year		DNAs (pa)	DNA percentage	Lost clinics (pa)
2011	Pre-MJog	30,000	12.5%	1,500
2012	MJog implemented March 2012	21,000	8.75%	1,050
2013	As of September 2013	19,200	8%	960

"We are now at an DNA rate 8.04% and have recovered 8,300 patient appointment slots, equivalent to 415 clinics a year. As well as minimising wasted nurse, doctors and consultant time, MJog has helped improve the speed of our PbR funding."

Patrick Maes, PMO, Princess Alexander Hospital NHS Trust





MJog helps Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust elevate into the NHS' top 25-percentile group

Located in Harlow, Essex, the Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust is a 489 bedded District General Hospital providing a comprehensive range of acute and specialist services to a local population of 258,000 people. The hospital is currently moving towards Foundation Trust status.

As a part of its ongoing drive to reduce costs and improve efficiencies, the Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust (PAH) has initiated a number of programmes – some as a result of NHS and Government drives to save money and deliver nationwide improvements to services, and others driven by the Trust's board of directors and stakeholders. One of these has been to reduce the number of outpatient Did Not Attend (DNAs) which, at 12.5% was broadly in line with national figures.

30,000 DNAs per annum

"Each year, we had around 30,000 DNAs which wasted a great deal of the Trust's time and money and had a knock-on effect as our nurses and consultants could have spent this lost time with other outpatients," explained Patrick Maes, PMO at Princess Alexander Hospital NHS Trust. "Patients have a legal right to start their NHS consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks from referral and although we continue to meet this target, we recognised that there was scope for further improvement if we could reduce the levels of DNA."

With an average of 20 patient appointment slots per clinic each day, PAH's 30,000 DNAs annually equated to a loss of 1,500 clinics, or 30 clinics per week.

Historically, PAH had relied upon administrative and, occasionally, nursing staff to telephone outpatients and remind them of forthcoming appointments. "Although this process worked fairly well and allowed us to backfill some cancelled appointments by calling patients on the waiting list to propose an appointment directly, we were only able to reach a small percentage of outpatients and still had problems with patients simply not turning up for scheduled appointments," continued Patrick Maes. "Trying to telephone each patient 24 or 48 hours in advance was hugely time consuming and expensive and with the best will in the world, we could only manage at best around 100 calls a day. With some 200,000 to 250,000 outpatient appointments each year, we weren't really making much impact."

"Of all of the possible suppliers, only MJog was so confident their system would deliver the benefits and savings we sought that they were willing to allow us to trial their system free of charge.

We are now at an DNA rate 8.04%, which means we have recovered approximately 8,300 patient slots, equivalent to 415 clinics a year or 8.3 clinics per week."

Patrick Maes
PMO
Princess Alexander Hospital NHS Trust

A win-win opportunity

A further PAH objective was to maintain and improve Payment by Results (PbR) – the system under which funding for secondary care flows around the NHS in England – an element of which is dependent upon Trusts achieving the 18 week “referral to consultant-led treatment” target. “Under PbR, our Trust is paid for each patient seen or treated, taking into account the complexity of the patient’s healthcare needs,” explained Patrick Maes. “Outpatient DNAs directly affect the rate in which we receive funding, so in addition to minimising wasted nurse, GP and consultant time, reducing our DNAs improves the levels and speed of our funding.”

Aware that several NHS Trusts had successfully implemented a mobile phone-based text messaging system to remind outpatients of upcoming appointments, Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust evaluated the potential that such a solution could offer. Satisfied that a text reminder system would reduce DNAs and save time and money, the Trust approached a number of suppliers of text and voice messaging solutions before deciding to implement MJog’s Patient Messaging Services. “Of all of the possible suppliers, only MJog was so confident their system would deliver the benefits and savings we sought that they were willing to allow us to trial their system free of charge,” said Patrick Maes. “This was a win-win situation.”

In March 2012, Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust began the MJog trial. To ensure patient confidentiality and comply with governance and best-practice mandates, MJog was installed on a separate (and isolated) server. Once a day, relevant information about upcoming outpatient appointments (name, date and time of appointment, mobile phone number, etc.) was downloaded to the server so that MJog could automatically send text reminders to each outpatient.

“The system is extremely easy to use and allows us to pre-plan and schedule messages in advance,” explained Patrick Maes. “Typically, patients received two text reminders, one 7 days before their appointment and one 24 hours ahead. Those unable to keep their appointments can then contact us, reschedule their appointment and allow nurses, doctors and consultants to reallocate the time to other patients.”

Elevation into NHS top 25 percentile group

Almost immediately, Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust saw a substantial improvement with DNAs dropping by over 1/3. “We are now at an DNA rate 8.04%, which means we have recovered approximately 8,300 patient slots, equivalent to 415 clinics a year or 8.3 clinics per week,” added Patrick Maes. “Our net “profit” is 35 clinics per month and as all DNA numbers in the NHS are calculated as a percentage of total appointments, by reducing our DNA percentage so significantly, Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust has been elevated into the NHS’ top 25-percentile group.”

Currently Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust relies solely upon MJog’s text-to-mobile facilities, but is evaluating the possibilities of extending the appointment reminder service to both landlines and possibly to patient email accounts. In 2013, the Trust used MJog to send over 100,000 text appointment reminders to outpatients (almost 50% of all outpatients) and expects the downward DNA trend to continue. The Trust is also considering the use of MJog for Friends and Family and using it as the basis for specific campaigns to patients.

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