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Finland/Germany

SMS Appointment Booking

In Finland and Germany, SMS-based Pre-Call services are said to be improving the efficiency of hospital appointment booking and encourage the patients' involvement in accessing healthcare.

In the North Karelia Central Hospital (PKKS) in Finland, a SMS-based Pre-Call Request service has reduced the cancelled appointments rate by 20 percent, a percentage equivalent to the annual workload of nine nurses who are now able to focus on delivering patient care. More precisely, according to preliminary results, the new process saves about 10-15 percent of the working hours per nurse who are dealing with booking appointments at the otorhinolaryngology clinic. Similarly, at the paediatric outpatient clinic, the SMS Pre-Call system has significantly reduced the number of phone calls by a third and phone calls regarding rescheduling by over 60 percent.

When a hospital is using the SMS Pre-Call Request service, each patient is requested about the suitability of the appointment date before booking the appointment or sending an invitation letter. Via the SMS-service, the hospital makes sure that the offered appointment date is suitable for the patient and thus reduces the need to reschedule appointments.

As far as patients' benefits are concerned, the SMS services enable them to take responsibility for their own access to care and make the appointment booking process more patient-oriented. This service eases the daily routines of healthcare professionals, improves organisational productivity and customer service and speeds up access to care.

SMS services have already been implemented in Sweden for several years. An interactive SMS solution has also been launched in Germany. The German service does not only support appointment confirmation and patient reminder processes, it also finds and reaches a suitable patient to replace a cancelled appointment.

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