



CHARNOCK HEALTH PRIMARY CARE CENTRE

Audit of appointment non-attenders - 2013

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This audit examines the details of patients who failed to keep their appointments and seeks their help in finding out how this happened

STUDY QUESTION

Why do patients fail to attend their appointments and can anything be done to make it easier for them to attend them or cancel them?

SUMMARY ANSWER

From the available data it appears that most patients who responded had booked their own appointment and simply forgotten to come. Many of them were concerned about this and felt that a text message or phone call reminding them of their appointment would have been helpful.

WHAT IS KNOWN AND WHAT THIS STUDY ADDS

Approximately 4% of appointments at Charnock Health remain unused when patients do not attend (DNA). This represents over eighty-five hours of medical time lost each year. Previous campaigns to raise awareness of this problem through patient information strategies have not been successful and previous patient feedback puts appointment availability as a major cause of concern for our patients.

Missed appointments imply a degree of patient inertia which is reflected in the 21% response to this study. Of those who did respond a clear picture emerged of concerned patients who simply forgot to attend.

Helping these patients to remember their appointments may be a strategy to explore, particularly if the appointment is booked more than a week in advance.

Missed appointments appear to cause embarrassment to some patients who seem to be uncomfortable discussing these behaviours.

No light was shed on those patients who repeatedly fail to attend their appointments as none of them were included in this survey.

It is interesting to note that a significant proportion of patients who did respond were in agreement with taking sanctions against repeated non-attenders.

PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

Patients of all ages who missed appointments at Charnock Health were identified using the computer appointment system. Appointments with general practitioners, nurse practitioner, practice nurse, healthcare assistant, phlebotomist and mental health worker were included.

DESIGN, SIZE AND DURATION

All those who missed appointments for a six month period between 1st April and 30th September 2013 were identified and sent a questionnaire (appendix 1) together with a covering letter and postage paid reply envelope.

Replies were collated and analysed with respect to events taking place before the appointment, on the day of the appointment and after the appointment (appendix 3).

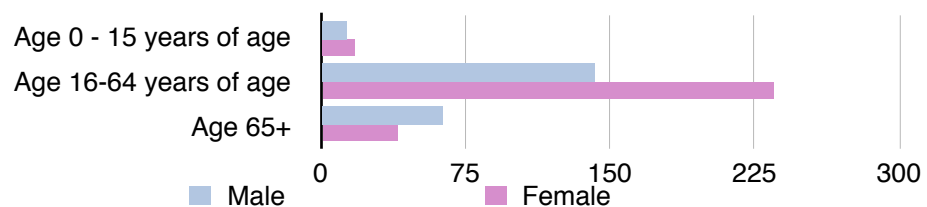
Demographic and known booking details were compiled for all patients who had missed appointments irrespective of their participation in the questionnaire (appendix 2). Incomplete questionnaires were not discarded but the sections left incomplete were noted and added to the data for analysis.

Patients were asked for any comments they wished to make about their missed appointments (appendix 4).

MAIN RESULTS AND THE ROLE OF CHANCE

We identified 512 missed appointments in the six months of the study period. These patients were self-selected by their non-attendance. Where a patient had missed more than one appointment a questionnaire was sent for each missed appointment.

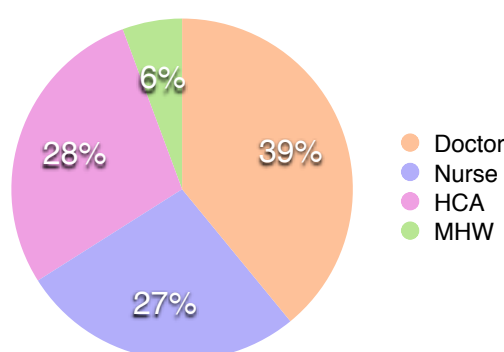
DNA Audit - Patient age group and sex



It was observed that patients in the age group 16-64 were most likely to miss their appointment (female 46%, male 28%). Males over 65 were also more likely to miss appointments (13%).

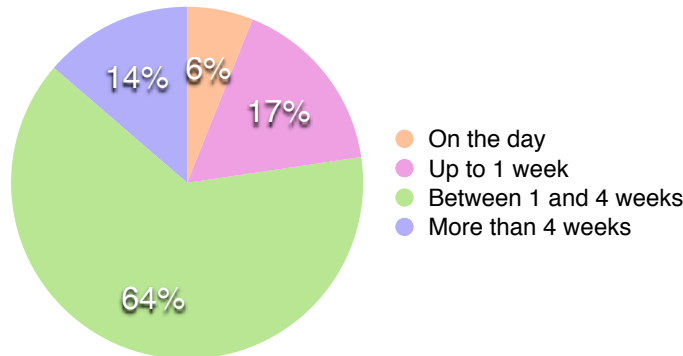
In terms of time lost, wasted appointments with a doctor were the most significant group (39%) with nurses and health care assistants (HCA's) roughly equal (27% and 28%).

DNA Audit - Appointment types



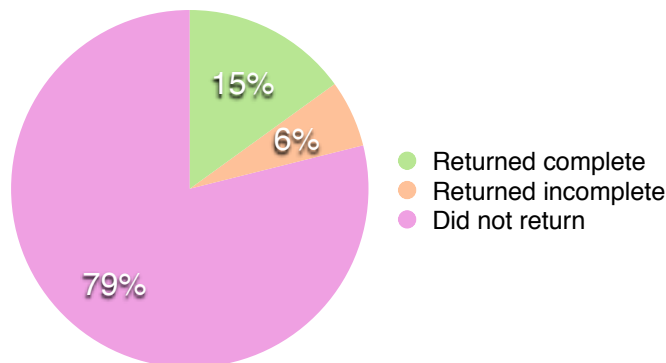
When we looked at the length of time between the patient making the appointment and the missed appointment, it was noted that patients booking 1-3 weeks in advance were most likely to miss their appointment (64%). Patients booking on the day were least likely to miss their appointment (6%).

DNA Audit - Time between booking and appointment



In response to this study we received 105 patient responses (21%) 77 of which had fully completed their questionnaire (15%). It seems likely that those who chose to return their questionnaire results may not have been fully representative of the group and their responses need to be interpreted accordingly.

DNA Audit - Response to questionnaire



Analysis of the responses to the questionnaire revealed that the typical DNA patient who responded had booked the appointment themselves (55%) either on the telephone (28%) or at the reception desk (28%) and noted it in their diary or on a calendar (41%). They had not changed their mind about coming (71%).

They had either forgotten (28%), got the day wrong (17%) or a domestic emergency had occurred (15%). Of those who remembered that they had an appointment 15% forgot to cancel it.

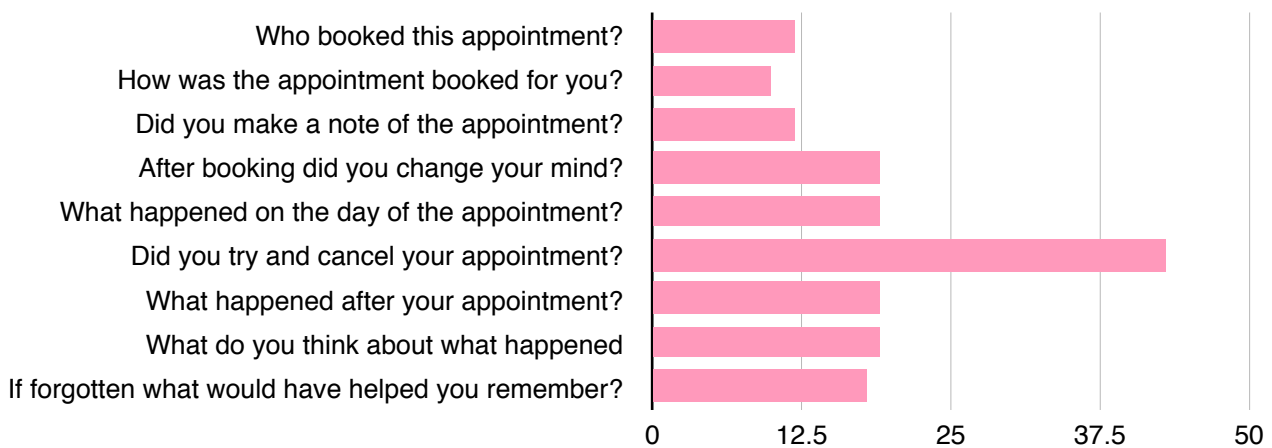
After the missed appointment most patients realised and apologised (39%) and many of them rebooked (24%). Most of them said it was unusual for them to miss an appointment and that they were concerned about it (69%). They thought that a text message (29%) or phone call (19%) would have helped them remember.

**BIAS,
CONFOUNDING,
AND OTHER
REASONS FOR
CAUTION**

Only 21% of patients responded to our questions. This group may not be representative of the majority of those who DNA'd and their views need to be interpreted with this in mind. It seems likely that this group will be more inclined to engage in dialogue with us and adopt strategies to avoid missed appointments. There were no responses received from patients who are known to frequently miss their appointments.

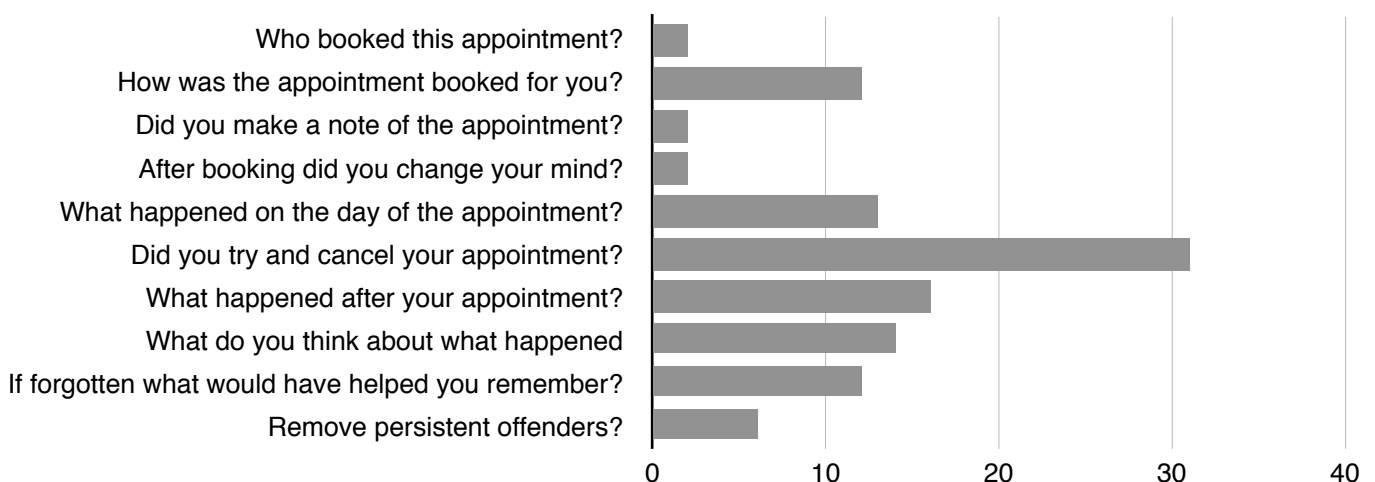
Each response group on the questionnaire gave patients an option to indicate that they genuinely believed that they did not have an appointment on the day in question. There was significant variation in this figure from question to question.

■ Number of patients who say they did not have an appointment



A similar picture appears when the data from incomplete responses is considered and the figures for failure to respond to particular questions is examined.

■ Number of patients who did not answer this question



The sharp peak in denial of an appointment and failure to give any information about cancellation behaviour may point to feelings of guilt or awkwardness on the part of those patients who failed to attend. Whilst this casts doubt over the accuracy of the information given in the questionnaire it also suggests that some patients feel uncomfortable that their failure to attend has been recognised and pointed out to them even in a supportive and non-threatening way.

It is also worth noting that no patients stated that they felt no obligation to cancel their appointment.

**GENERALISABILITY
TO OTHER
POPULATIONS**

Whilst there is no reason to think that the results of this study are unique to the patients of Charnock Health it is this specific population whose needs, behaviours and views will be considered when a discussion of possible interventions to improve outcomes takes place.

**STUDY FUNDING
AND POTENTIAL
COMPETING
INTERESTS**

This audit was funded entirely by the practice with no third party involvement. There are no recognised competing interests in any aspect of this research activity.

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CHARNOCK HEALTH PRIMARY CARE CENTRE

PATIENT QUESTIONNAIRE

We are trying to improve our appointment system by finding out why people may have missed their appointments with us. To do this we would appreciate your help in answering the questions below.

Please put a tick in the box which most closely describes your views. Please answer all the questions and try to be as honest as possible when you fill in your answers. The information you provide will help us to work out how we can make things work better and provide an improved appointment system.

Many thanks for your assistance in completing this questionnaire. When you have finished please return it to surgery in the prepaid envelope provided.

If you would like us to send you the results of this study please tick this box

Appointment date..... Appointment time..... Computer number.....

Who booked your appointment for the day and time written above?

- I booked it myself
 A friend or family member booked it for me
 The nurse booked my appointment for me
 The doctor booked my appointment for me
 I'm not sure who booked the appointment
 I don't think I had an appointment for that time on that day

How was the appointment booked for you?

- The appointment was booked on the telephone
 The appointment was booked at the reception desk
 The appointment was booked during a consultation
 I'm not sure how the appointment was booked
 I don't think I had an appointment for that time on that day

Did you make a note of the appointment?

- Yes, I wrote it in my diary or on my calendar
 Yes, I wrote it down on a piece of paper
 Yes, I put it on my computer, phone or electronic organiser
 No, I didn't write it down
 Someone else wrote it down for me
 I'm not sure what I did
 I don't think I had an appointment for that time on that day

After booking the appointment did you change your mind about coming?

- No, I didn't change my mind
 Yes, my problem got better
 Yes, I decided not to come and discuss my problem
 Yes, I got another appointment
 Yes, I had something more important to do on that day
 I don't think I had an appointment for that time on that day

What happened on the day of your appointment?

- I forgot all about my appointment
 I thought my appointment was for a different time
 I thought my appointment was for a different day
 An emergency occurred
 I changed my mind about coming
 I had unexpected problems with transport
 I felt too ill to come
 I was in hospital at the time
 I don't think I had an appointment for that time on that day

Did you try to cancel your appointment?

- I meant to cancel my appointment but forgot
 I tried to phone but couldn't get through
 I wanted to cancel but my phone was out of order
 I was unable to get to a telephone that day
 I definitely cancelled my appointment
 I chose not to cancel my appointment
 I don't think I had an appointment for that time on that day

What happened after your appointment?

- I realised I had missed my appointment but did nothing
 I realised I had missed my appointment and phoned to apologise
 I realised I had missed my appointment and phoned to apologise and booked another one
 I just booked another appointment
 I did not realise I had missed my appointment
 I don't think I had an appointment for that time on that day

What do you think about what happened?

- It's very unusual for me to miss an appointment and I am concerned that I missed this one
 I don't see why I should need to let you know if I'm not coming
 I have no particular opinion about what happened
 I don't think I had an appointment for that time on that day

If you forgot your appointment, which of the following do you think would have most helped you to remember it?

- I did not forget my appointment
 A phone call the day before to remind me
 A text message the day before to remind me
 An email the day before to remind me
 I don't think I had an appointment for that time on that day

Some practices have adopted the policy of removing patients from their list when they miss a lot of appointments.

Do you think this is a good idea?

- Yes, I think this would be a good thing to do
 No, I do not think this is a good idea
 I have no opinion about this

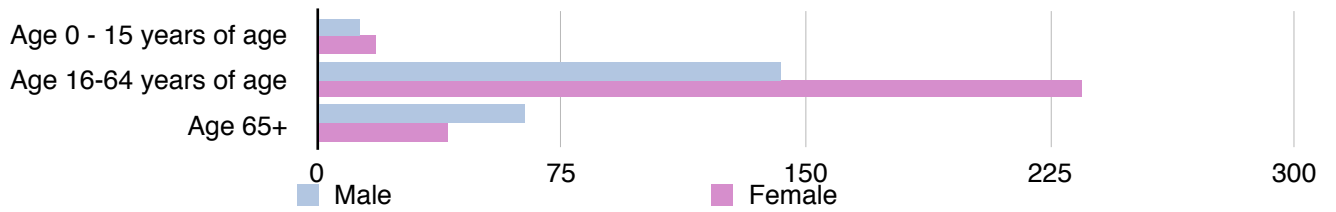
DNA Audit - Missed appointment types	Doctor	Nurse	HCA	MHW	Total
Type of appointment	200	138	145	29	512
Percentage	39%	27%	28%	6%	100%

DNA Audit - Patient survey demographic	Male	%	Female	%	Total
Age 0 - 15 years of age	13	3%	18	4%	31
Age 16-64 years of age	142	28%	235	46%	377
Age 65+	64	13%	40	8%	104
Total	219	43%	293	57%	512

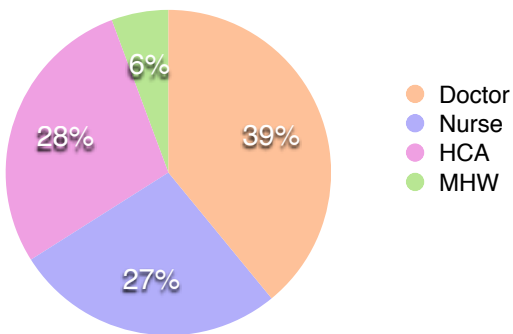
DNA Audit - Time between booking and appointment	Number	%
On the day	31	6%
Up to 1 week	85	17%
Between 1 and 4 weeks	326	64%
More than 4 weeks	70	14%
Total	512	100%

DNA Audit - Response to questionnaire	Number	%
Returned complete	77	15%
Returned incomplete	31	6%
Did not return	404	79%
Total	512	100%

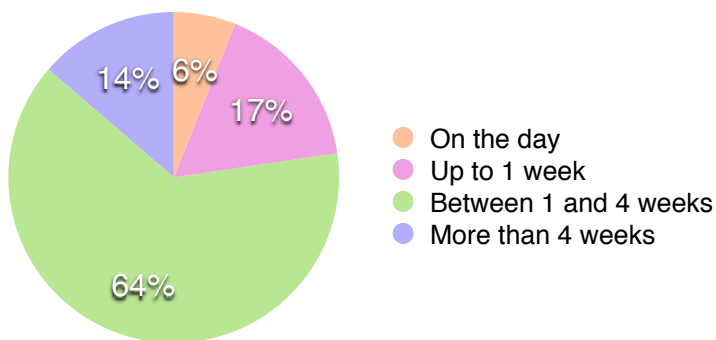
DNA Audit - Patient age group and sex



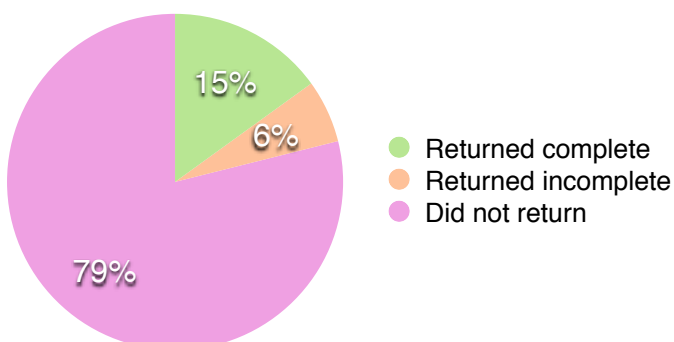
DNA Audit - Appointment types



DNA Audit - Time between booking and appointment



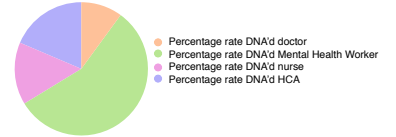
DNA Audit - Response to questionnaire



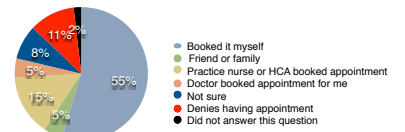
DNA Audit	April	May	June	July	August	September	TOTAL	Percent
Number of patients DNA each month	85	94	87	81	71	97	515	
Number of appointments booked with doctor	1289	1160	1191	1255	1151	1256	7302	
Number of appointments booked with nurse	563	469	495	498	436	435	2896	
Number of appointments booked with HCA/phlebotomy	393	383	302	404	356	332	2170	
Number of appointments booked with mental health	27	34	30	42	33	43	209	
Total number of appointments	2272	2046	2018	2199	2047	2163	12745	
DNA as percentage of total appointments	4%	5%	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	



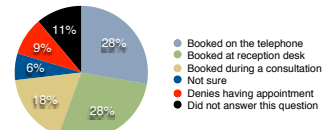
Number DNA'd doctor	45	39	39	31	39	38	231	
Percentage DNA'd doctor	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	
Number DNA'd nurse	12	23	28	29	20	26	138	
Percentage DNA'd nurse	2%	5%	6%	6%	5%	6%	5%	
Number DNA'd HCA	26	27	23	24	15	12	127	
Percentage DNA'd HCA	7%	7%	8%	6%	4%	4%	6%	
Number DNA'd Mental Health Worker	2	10	6	6	7	6	37	
Percentage DNA'd Mental Health Worker	7%	29%	20%	14%	21%	14%	18%	



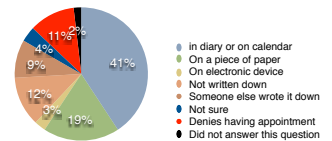
Who booked this appointment?	April	May	June	July	August	September	TOTAL	Percent
Booked it myself	17	14	7	7	8	6	59	55%
Friend or family	0	1	0	0	2	2	5	5%
Practice nurse or HCA booked appointment	3	5	4	3	1	0	16	15%
Doctor booked appointment for me	2	0	0	0	1	2	5	5%
Not sure	2	1	0	3	2	1	9	8%
Denies having appointment	1	2	2	3	3	1	12	11%
Did not answer this question						2	2	2%
							108	100%



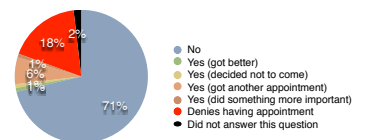
How was the appointment booked for you?	April	May	June	July	August	September	TOTAL	Percent
Booked on the telephone	8	8	1	3	6	4	30	28%
Booked at reception desk	1	7	5	8	4	5	30	28%
Booked during a consultation	5	4	5	2	2	1	19	18%
Not sure	1	1	0	2	2	1	7	6%
Denies having appointment	1	2	2	1	3	1	10	9%
Did not answer this question						2	2	2%
							108	100%



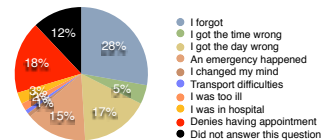
Did you make a note of the appointment?	April	May	June	July	August	September	TOTAL	Percent
In diary or on calendar	13	8	3	9	7	4	44	41%
On a piece of paper	3	4	5	3	4	1	20	19%
On electronic device	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	3%
Not written down	2	3	2	1	0	5	13	12%
Someone else wrote it down	2	2	1	2	2	1	10	9%
Not sure	2	0	0	0	0	2	4	4%
Denies having appointment	1	3	2	1	4	1	12	11%
Did not answer this question						2	2	2%
							108	100%



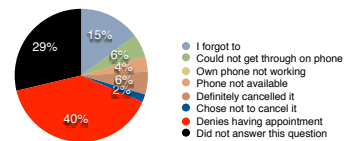
After booking did you change your mind?	April	May	June	July	August	September	TOTAL	Percent
No	22	18	8	11	9	9	77	71%
Yes (got better)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1%
Yes (decided not to come)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1%
Yes (got another appointment)	0	1	2	1	2	1	7	6%
Yes (did something more important)	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1%
Denies having appointment	3	3	3	4	4	2	19	18%
Did not answer this question						2	2	2%
							108	100%



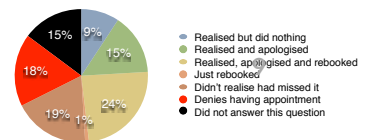
What happened on the day of the appointment?	April	May	June	July	August	September	TOTAL	Percent
I forgot	10	9	1	3	2	5	30	28%
I got the time wrong	1	2	0	1	1	0	5	5%
I got the day wrong	3	1	3	5	5	1	18	17%
An emergency happened	6	4	2	1	1	2	16	15%
I changed my mind	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1%
Transport difficulties	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1%
I was too ill	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2%
I was in hospital	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	3%
Denies having appointment	3	3	2	4	5	2	19	18%
Did not answer this question						13	13	12%
							108	100%



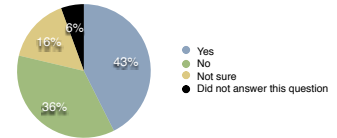
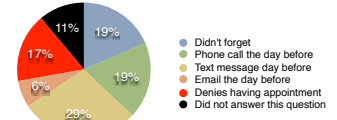
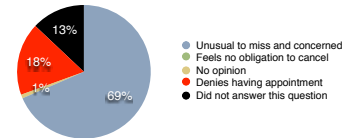
Did you try and cancel your appointment?	April	May	June	July	August	September	TOTAL	Percent
I forgot to	5	5	0	2	1	3	16	15%
Could not get through on phone	2	1	0	2	0	1	6	6%
Own phone not working	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Phone not available	0	1	2	0	1	0	4	4%
Definitely cancelled it	1	1	1	1	2	0	6	6%
Chose not to cancel it	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2%
Denies having appointment	10	6	4	7	10	6	43	40%
Did not answer this question						31	31	29%
							108	100%



What happened after your appointment?	April	May	June	July	August	September	TOTAL	Percent
Realised but did nothing	3	3	1	0	2	1	10	9%
Realised and apologised	2	3	2	2	5	2	16	15%
Realised, apologised and rebooked	7	6	2	2	6	3	26	24%
Just rebooked	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1%
Didn't realise had missed it	6	1	2	6	1	4	20	19%
Denies having appointment	5	2	3	4	4	1	19	18%
Did not answer this question						16	16	15%

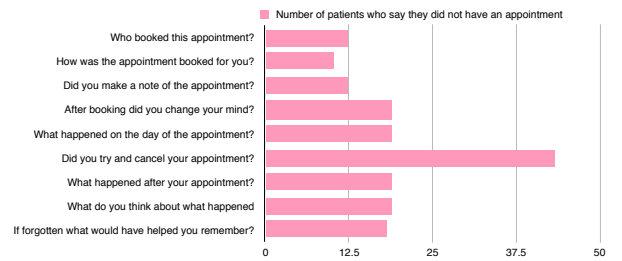


DNA Audit	April	May	June	July	August	September	TOTAL	Percent
							Total	108
								100%
What do you think about what happened								
Unusual to miss and concerned	21	12	9	11	12	9	74	69%
Feels no obligation to cancel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
No opinion	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1%
Denies having appointment	3	4	1	4	4	3	19	18%
Did not answer this question							14	13%
							Total	108
								100%
If forgotten what would have helped you remember?								
Didn't forget	3	5	3	2	5	2	20	19%
Phone call the day before	5	4	2	5	2	2	20	19%
Text message day before	10	6	3	4	5	3	31	29%
Email the day before	1	1	1	1	1	2	7	6%
Denies having appointment	4	2	1	6	4	1	18	17%
Did not answer this question							12	11%
							Total	108
								100%
Remove persistent offenders?								
Yes	10	9	9	7	7	4	46	43%
No	10	9	1	6	5	8	39	36%
Not sure	6	4	1	2	4	0	17	16%
Did not answer this question							6	6%
							Total	108
								100%



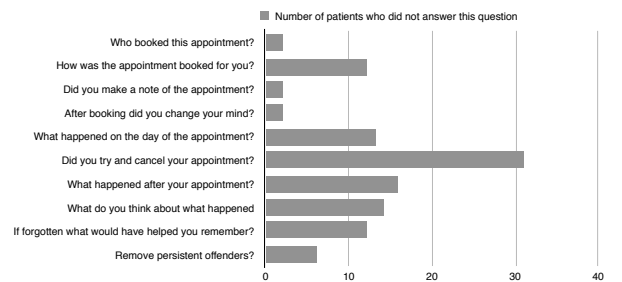
Patients denying having an appointment

Question Section	Number of patients who say they did not have an appointment	Percentage
Who booked this appointment?	12	11%
How was the appointment booked for you?	10	10%
Did you make a note of the appointment?	12	11%
After booking did you change your mind?	19	18%
What happened on the day of the appointment?	19	18%
Did you try and cancel your appointment?	43	41%
What happened after your appointment?	19	18%
What do you think about what happened	19	18%
If forgotten what would have helped you remember?	18	17%



Patients omitting particular questions

Question Section	Number of patients who did not answer this question	Percentage
Who booked this appointment?	2	2%
How was the appointment booked for you?	12	11%
Did you make a note of the appointment?	2	2%
After booking did you change your mind?	2	2%
What happened on the day of the appointment?	13	12%
Did you try and cancel your appointment?	31	30%
What happened after your appointment?	16	15%
What do you think about what happened	14	13%
If forgotten what would have helped you remember?	12	11%
Remove persistent offenders?	6	6%



- *Due to being ill I came back a day later than expected which is why I missed my appointment.*
- *I did not make an appointment for this date at all*
- *There should be a comment section on the questionnaire. I was very busy that week of my missed appointment, I called the same day to apologise and make another appointment.*
- *Husband on triage with chest pain, doctor sent for an ambulance for husband, wife told doctor that she had an appointment the next day and to cancel it but the doctor did not cancel it. I have always kept my appointments in the past and cancelled if I could not make it. I have been with this practice for 57 years.*
- *The appointment was cancelled by the doctor who I saw on a previous appointment.*
- *My alleged appointment on 3rd of July was missed because the receptionist gave me a slip of paper for 4th July and i entered it in my diary. I have hunted everywhere for the slip of paper but cannot find it. I can't tell you who the receptionist was on the day, I think this is a case where name tags would be useful. I apologise to the practice for any inconvenience caused but I believe the problem arose with the receptionist giving me one date and entering it on the computer as another.*
- *Although there are some out of hours appointments, more flexibility would be helpful. I work 9 till 5 Mondays to Fridays in a very busy environment where circumstances can change very quickly. I apologise most sincerely for missing this appointment and as always will endeavour to ensure that this does not reoccur*
- *I thought it had been cancelled by the surgery since I had been given an earlier one.*
- *I was told that I could ring in at 8.30 on a certain date before then to see if there was a cancellation or earlier one.*
- *Nurse rang on behalf of Doctor to query change of medication, so I no longer needed the appointment. The nurse forgot to cancel it not me.*
- *On our way to surgery our car was involved in an accident, neither of us had mobile phones so could not get in touch with surgery. As soon as I could I phoned later that day to apologise.*
- *I completely forgot I had to go back after my blood test*
- *My appointment was booked a long time in advance and I got my dates mixed up as I did not get an appointment card and no reminder as my phone failed notification.*
- *Please note. I very rarely come to surgery to see a doctor. I had to go for an X-ray and made this appointment for results prior to the X-ray and really was waiting to hear the results had come back and forgot I had already made an appointment. I was very sorry and did apologise. I am not in the habit of not keeping appointments, once again I am really sorry.*
- *I got an earlier appointment with the nurse, the receptionist cancelled it.*

- *I came to surgery at 10.40, apologised to reception that I was 45 minutes late and the doctor could not see me so the receptionist made me another appointment. I have never missed an appointment in 50 years.*
- *I must apologise for missing this appointment, two weeks previous I find I had to be in Ireland on the Monday preceding, it was my intention to telephone to cancel this, unfortunately it slipped my mind. I have been a patient of this practice since the early 1960's and if you check your records i am sure you will find that this is the first appointment I have missed. Again i apologise and i assure you this will not happen again.*
- *My problem got better then I just forgot. I work in the NHS and should know better. I phoned 20 minutes after my appointment and could not be fitted in so made another appointment.*
- *I turned up the following day which i thought was the right day.*
- *My appointment was made by a nurse during a previous consultation, but was for the end of the month, wrong information put into computer or given to me on a card by the nurse.*
- *This appointment was for a B12 injection but because I had a holiday booked, the appointment was cancelled by phone and a new one made.*
- *This is the first time I have missed my appointment for approximately 51 years, check your records.*
- *I apologise for missing my appointment with the nurse. I thought it was for August (one month later)*
- *I am sorry I missed my appointment as a family member was rushed into the emergency department with a burst aneurysm and was given a 30% chance of surviving so I forgot my appointment.*
- *This appointment was cancelled by the mental health worker.*
- *I thought my appointment was a different date. I did turn up and was told I had already missed it.*
- *I definitely cancelled my appointment.*
- *The appointment was made by the nurse at my B12 injection 3 months ago but the appointments were not on the computer. The nurse makes it later and i usually confirm it but I clearly forgot. Three months is a long time. I don't recall missing it before.*
- *I mistook Thursday for Wednesday*
- *Took wife's earlier appointment*
- *I had a prior appointment with the doctor at which all my issues were addressed, I cancelled my appointment at the reception desk on the way out. It was busy with people waiting and telephones ringing and I can only assume this was a genuine mistake made by the receptionist at a busy time.*
- *People do get forgetful*

- *My husband put some letters across my table diary covering my appointment until later. I called the surgery and rebooked.*
- *I rang having realised I had forgot my appointment. I apologised and made a further one two days later.*
- *I had an interview the next day and was busy thinking and revising for it.*
- *I also work in an appointment job and find people will always forget an appointment due to busy lives. A text message the day before would be very helpful.*
- *I had to cancel an appointment for my daughter recently as I was ill and could see it took me ages to get through and I nearly gave up. Maybe an email or answer machine cancellation service.*
- *Rang and rearranged my and my husbands new patient check appointments. Receptionist must not have cancelled the original ones.*
- *I am very sorry.*
- *Very sorry.*
- *To my knowledge I have never missed an appointment without cancelling it with reception.*