

Introduction

- With rapid growth in the need for genetic counseling, the field has pushed to increase efficiency.
- Focus has been on efficiency of genetic counselors.
- Improving genetic counseling assistant (GCA) efficiency has received minimal attention.

Aim

To assess the effectiveness, acceptability, and time savings associated with replacing scheduling via phone call from a GCA with automated text messages.

Methods

We piloted automated text message-based scheduling to improve both efficiency and the number of referrals that result in completed visits. We compared patients who were texted during this pilot to similar patients who were phoned prior to the pilot.

Patients called
3 months (6-8/2020)
1,376 patients

vs.

Patients texted
3 months (1-3/2021)
1,289 patients

Called & texted patients were from same subset of referring organizations.

1. Compared rate of appointment attendance when scheduling initiated by phone vs text.
2. Evaluated acceptability of text using patient satisfaction data, collected as part of routine care.
3. Conducted a time study to determine GCA time saved using text-based scheduling.

Results

Figure 1: Text is more effective than phone

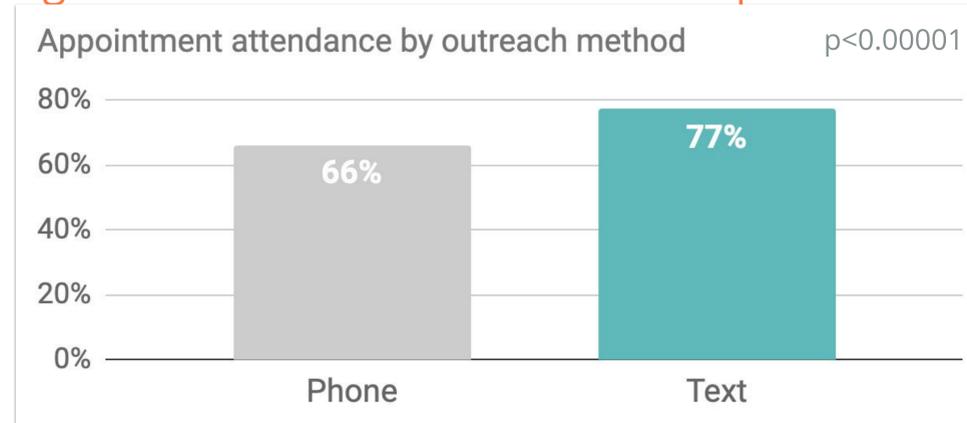


Figure 2: When texted, most schedule via text

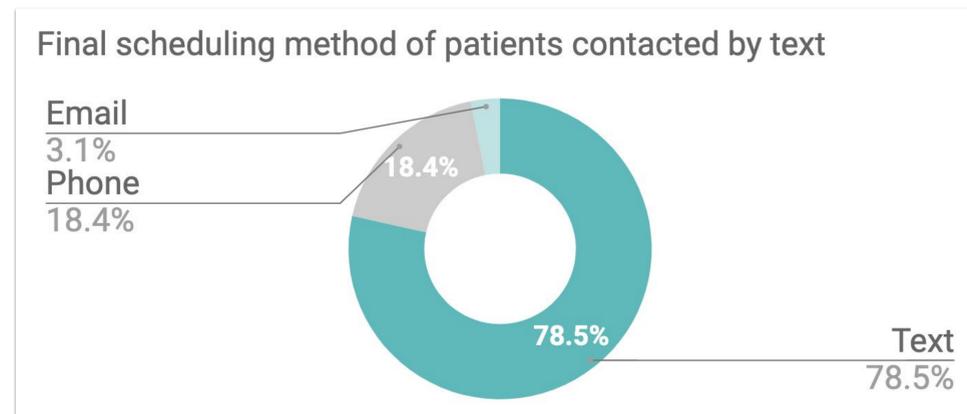
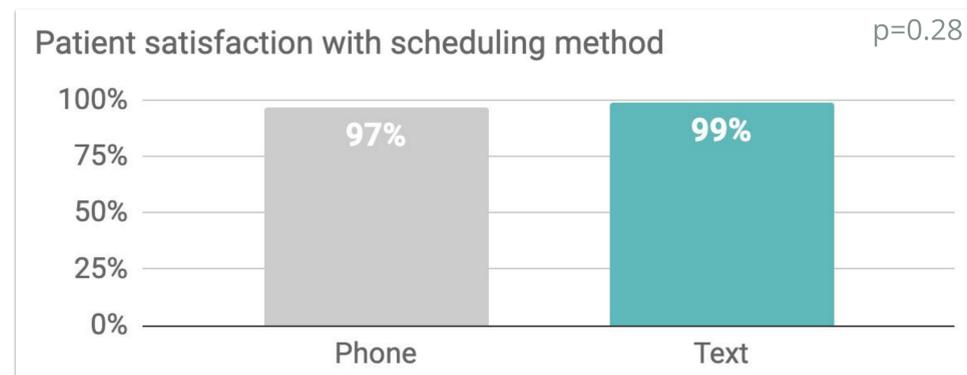


Figure 3: Text is acceptable to patients



Results

Scheduling by text saves time

- GCA time was recorded for 149 referrals that were scheduled by phone.
- Mean number of calls per referral was 1.4.
- Mean GCA time on scheduling per referral was 4.1 minutes.
- Texting to schedule was automated and did not require any GCA time.

Time savings:



91.6 hrs/month
GCA time



\$468.88/month
GCA salary

Note: Savings is for subset of patients included in the pilot. Cost savings would be substantially greater if applied across entire service.

Discussion

- Text-based scheduling is an effective and efficient alternative to GCAs calling patients to schedule.
- This innovation may be relevant to other roles involved in scheduling (ex. Clinical administrative staff).

Limitations

- Effectiveness, acceptability, and efficiency may be different for patients from different referring organizations.