



UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL MONDAY 3RD AUGUST AT 00:01

SIMPLE SMS REMINDERS WILL SEE 780K MORE PATIENTS ATTENDING CANCER SCREENINGS IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS, NEW CAMPAIGN REVEALS

A [new campaign](#) has been launched today by the UK’s largest independent healthcare management app, ‘myGP’, urging NHSX to introduce centralised SMS reminders across all national cancer screening programmes. The proposed solution, if implemented as standard across all GP practices in England, would save approximately 7,800 lives each year.¹ Currently, only 34 percent of practices can ensure their patients receive a text message reminder alongside the traditional screening invite letter.²

Central to the ‘Remind Us’ campaign is a [petition](#), which acts as a public record of support for a much-needed intervention, based on recent research revealing that a simple SMS reminder can increase uptake of cancer screening by an average of 5.2 percent.³ As the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a dramatic decrease in cancer diagnoses due to the pause put on the programmes, it is now more important than ever to encourage patients to action their invitation to screening.⁴

The current disparity between local authorities’ cancer screening rates is concerning – below is a league table of England’s most populated cities, showing those who are doing well, and those who are struggling. The percentage is based on an average across the three main cancer screening programmes – breast, bowel and cervical.ⁱ

Cities	% of eligible patients attending screening appointments
London	53%
Manchester	60%
Leicester	62%
Birmingham	63%
Southampton	64.8%

¹ Based on 1% of all cancer screenings detecting an abnormality, as outlined in the independent review highlighted below. Out of 15 million cancer screenings for eligible customers, a 5.2% increase in appointment uptake would be an additional 780K attendees, of which 1% is 7,800 lives.

² myGP data on file.

³ 5.2% is the average uplift in appointment attendance across the three main cancer screening programmes, when SMS reminders are sent centrally - breast +5.3%, cervical +4.8%, and bowel +5.6%

Breast - <https://www.iplato.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Breast-Cancer-Screening-Case-Study.pdf>

Bowel - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC520096/>

Cervical <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0091743520301948>

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/may/28/cancer-undiagnosed-for-nearly-2000-people-in-uk-every-week>

Liverpool	64.9%
Nottingham	67.6%
Bristol	67.7%
Newcastle	69%
Leeds	71%

According to Sir Mike Richards' independent review of adult screening services in England, out of the 15 million adults across England who are invited for a free NHS screening, only approximately 10 million patients attend. If all practices were able to sign-up to the centralised SMS reminder service, there would be an estimated increase in uptake of 5.2 percent - or approximately 780K more patients attending screenings, based on the research.⁵

Considering that in every hundred cancer screenings, at least one abnormality is detected, this means that the increased uptake achieved by the simple SMS reminder could result in approximately 7,800 lives being saved each year.⁶

One of the experts behind the '[Remind Us](#)' campaign is Professor Michael Lewis, Head of Life Science Innovation at the University of Birmingham. He comments on why NHSX must act fast:

"There are now several conclusive research papers that reveal the power of sending an SMS reminder to book or attend a screening appointment. This information cannot be ignored. I, for one, have lost too many family members to cancer, to stand-by and not act upon this knowledge.

"Often the most basic technologies can be overlooked, but the research means there's no reason for NHSX to ignore this call for change. The cost of sending SMS messages to patients is very small, compared to the thousands of pounds required to treat cancer that hasn't been detected early enough."

Ivo Vlaev, Professor of Behaviour Science at Warwick Business School is one of the research fellows behind the UK's first cervical cancer screening SMS study. He supports the interventive campaign:

"I spent a number of years looking into the benefits of interventions such as messages and SMS reminders to increase uptake of screening attendance, and I know that this easy-to-implement method can dramatically improve cancer survival rates in this country. The fact that one text can increase uptake in cervical screening appointments by almost 5 percent, to me is a no brainer, and I whole-heartedly support this campaign to introduce these reminders nationally. I would ask all my friends, colleagues and the public to support this campaign – receiving one letter invitation for cancer screenings isn't enough."

SMS reminders in practice

Today, around 85 percent of adult patients have given consent to receive SMS communication from their GP surgery, which confirms the desirability of SMS as a communication medium.⁷ The cost of

⁵ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/report-of-the-independent-review-of-adult-screening-programme-in-england.pdf> /

⁶ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/report-of-the-independent-review-of-adult-screening-programme-in-england.pdf> (Of the 10 million attendances each year, 10,000 lives are saved – that's 1% who are found to have an abnormality.)

⁷ myGP data

sending two centralised SMS screening reminders to each eligible patient is approximately £2.5m annually, on average, for each type of cancer screening - breast, cervical, and bowel. When comparing the small investment in sending SMS messages to the investment required to treat cervical cancer — which can vary from £1,300 - £19,000 per patient — the economic advantages are clear.

Already, the campaign has the support of cancer charities including breast cancer charity 'The Pink Ribbon Foundation' and 'The Bowel Movement' charity. **Abby Morris, Founder of The Bowel Movement campaign** set up the charity after her brother lost his life, aged 32, to bowel cancer – she comments on the importance of the campaign:

“Early detection and diagnosis for bowel cancer has a significant impact on the likelihood of whether an individual will have a successful response to treatment and will survive more than five years following their diagnosis.

“Cancer screenings have dropped by around 80 percent during the pandemic which has had a drastic impact on the ability to detect and diagnose individuals with bowel cancer, with many people not wishing to burden the NHS during this time. This timely campaign is therefore crucial for boosting uptake and attendance at vital screening appointments.”

Get involved, get social

To raise awareness of the importance of attending cancer screenings, and to promote the new campaign, myGP has launched a #RemindUs social media campaign, whereby people can tag the people they are closest to, whilst including the #remindus hashtag to raise awareness of the importance of attending cancer screening appointments.

-ENDS-

For more information, images, case studies or to arrange an interview, please contact Lisa Malyon at Lisa@sensecommunications.co.uk or call 07525204402.

About myGP

- myGP is the UK's largest independent GP booking and healthcare management app, created by health technology company iPLATO Healthcare, Ltd.
 - The myGP app was created to give NHS patients improved, and more convenient access to primary healthcare. By making all services available in one app, users can manage and navigate their own healthcare quickly and efficiently, whilst seeing all the options available to them that they may not have previously been aware of.
 - myGP is the health app of choice, used by 1.7 million NHS patients. Its most popular patient features include:
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