

National Health IT Board Case Study

TXT2Remind dramatically improves immunisation rates

Raukura Hauora O Tainui is now a top performer as immunisation rates shift from 55 to 98 percent in just over a year.

Raukura Hauora O Tainui, an iwi charitable trust PHO with more than 20,000 clients, has dramatically improved its immunisation rates by utilising a common technology in an innovative way.

In January 2010, it implemented Vensa Health's TXT2Remind practice to patient text messaging system across its North Waikato district general practices.

The PHO was well below the national immunisation average rate of 88 percent but, after using TXT2Remind for just over a year, nationally it is now among the top performers. Now it averages 98 percent coverage, with four of the five clinics at 100 percent coverage.

Chief Executive of Raukura Hauora O Tainui, Wayne McLean, says, 'To improve health and prevent illness we need to be really smart about our time and resources to get the best performance we can. Every missed appointment is a missed opportunity to help someone. TXT2Remind has been a very effective tool to encourage people to access the services they need, when they need them.'

TXT2Remind fits with the National Health IT Board's drive to use technology to improve health outcomes. Graeme Osborne, Director of the Board says, 'This is a good example of delivering health benefits through smart use of mobile technology.'

Background

In late 2009, Vensa Health began working with Wayne McLean to understand the challenges the organisation faced with patient access to primary health care services. Wayne identified that the key issue was missed appointments, resulting in low immunisation rates and other lost opportunities to improve health outcomes.

The process of sending letters to patients is very time intensive, and many were not reaching the patient. Contributing factors included frequent changes of address and letters remaining unopened.

Challenges

The biggest challenge was the shift from a paper-based recall process to mobile phone text messaging. Staff took three to four months to become confident users of the new system.

Updating patient cellphone details was another challenge, and maintaining current numbers will be an ongoing challenge.

Benefits

Performance has also been lifted across other scheduled programmes that require reminders and follow-ups such as mammograms and cervical screening.

The TXT2Remind automated recall process has reduced costs and administrative time, and freed up clinical staff so they can focus more on following up hard-to-reach groups.

Raukura Hauora O Tainui has also used TXT2Remind to contact patients with diabetes and has seen a significant improvement with more patients attending appointments to review of their condition.

What is TXT2Remind?

Vensa Health's TXT2Remind is a text-messaging service that can be used for any services that allows for recall, pre-call and text notification. It is ideal for child immunisations, as texting is the preferred communication method for the target audience of young mothers and caregivers.

The system was first adopted by the McLaren Park Medical Centre in West Auckland in January 2007. Since then, Vensa has worked hard designing a system that meets the needs of clinicians.

How does TXT2Remind work?

TXT2Remind works with patient management systems used in general practices and hospital patient administration systems. Working directly with the patient management system database, it allows automation of appointment reminders, test results, pre-calls and recalls by mobile text messaging and other forms of electronic communication.

The system sends back an electronic receipt, so if a cellphone number is not valid, the practice is immediately alerted that the message has not reached the patient.

Next steps

Raukura Hauora O Tainui is now working with BreastScreen Midland to improve breast screening rates. Mobile breast screening caravans have been located at some Raukura Hauora O Tainui clinics. Screening coverage has already risen from 40 to 53 percent and is expected to increase further.

The Midland Health Network, a Better, Sooner, More Convenient business case group, has signed a regional contract to implement TXT2Remind across the entire Midland primary health sector.

The system can also be used in hospitals, for example, Whanganui District Health Board has implemented TXT2Remind in the hospital as well as primary health care.

District Health Boards in the Midland region are currently considering a regional approach to adopting TXT2Remind in all hospitals.

Project partners

The partnership between Wayne McLean, Chief Executive, Raukura Hauora O Tainui and Ahmad Jubbawey, Chief Executive, Vensa Health, resulted in the adoption of TXT2Remind.

The partnership was fully supported by Brett Paradine, General Manager, Funding and Planning, Waikato District Health Board who says, 'We've seen an impressive improvement in immunisation performance from Raukawa. We know that a key component in achieving and maintaining high immunisation rates is systematic precall and recall of vaccinations.'

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