

Improvement of Outpatient Follow-up Appointments After Hospital Discharge in a Tertiary Care Veterans Affairs Hospital: A Pilot Project



Background

- At the Minneapolis Veteran Affairs Health Care System (MVAHCS), the process of scheduling the primary care clinic (PCC) follow-up appointments is generally initiated by a phone call from PCC nurses or PCC medical support assistants after the hospital discharge
- Our preliminary data showed that this process fails to schedule 22% of the ordered appointments

Aims

- Create a new process that generates the PCC follow-up appointments prior to patients leaving the hospital
- Evaluate whether a new process is effective in scheduling PCC follow-up appointments and whether this process lead to more adherence to PCC follow-up appointment

Methods

- A new process to generate the PCC follow-up appointments prior to hospital discharge was piloted in a 19-bed general medical ward (3F ward) (Figure 1)
 - Developed new order template for PCC follow-up appointments to standardize the follow-up order and to allow follow-up order to be placed separately from the discharge order set (Figure 2)
 - Trained an inpatient medical support assistant to schedule PCC follow-up appointments
- Discharging providers were informed about the new pilot process but the decision to participate was voluntary

Figure 2. PCC follow-up appointment order template

Schedule Followup Appt in Clinic (name):	PCP
Schedule Appt For (timeframe):	2-3 weeks
Other Followup Clinic Orders:	
Additional Appointments/Outpatient Orders:	
Additional Supplies/Treatments:	

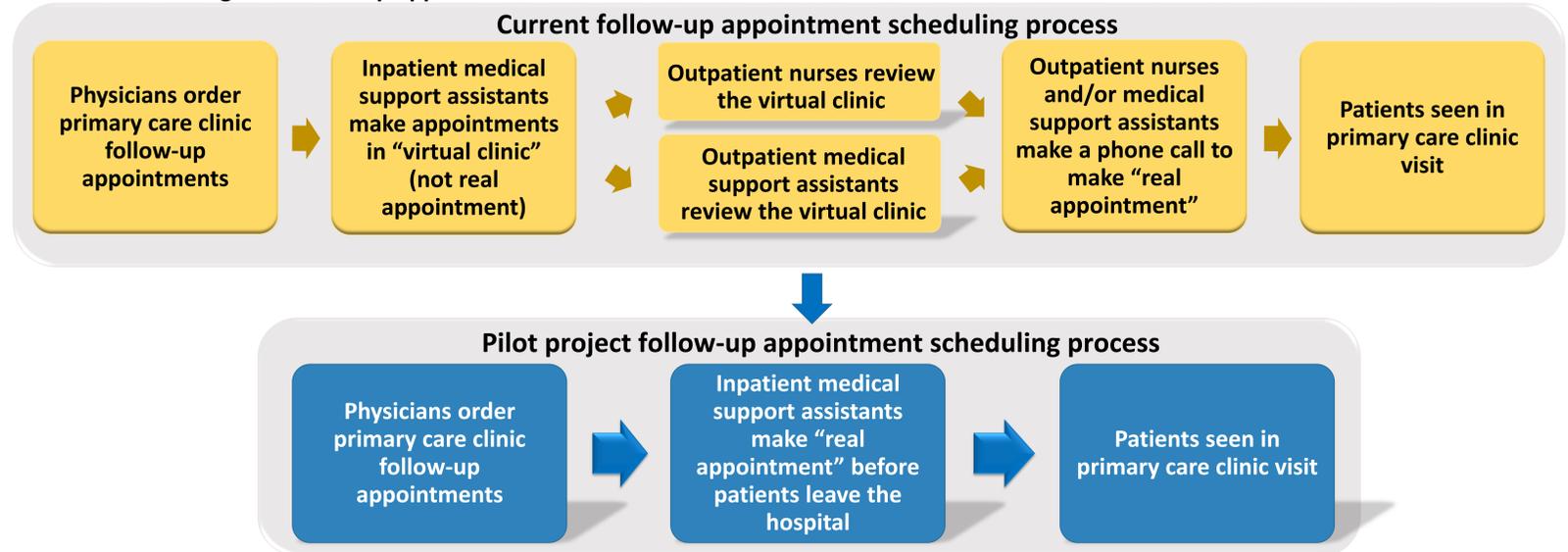
Current PCC follow-up appointment order template

Return to Clinic/Appointment After Discharge:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	No follow up appointment needed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Primary Care Provider: 2 Weeks
D/C Provider: order test for desired F/U date	
<input type="checkbox"/>	With Lab
<input type="checkbox"/>	With Fasting Lab
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	With No Lab
<input type="checkbox"/>	Imaging Test

New PCC follow-up appointment order template

Methods (cont)

Figure 1. New process for scheduling PCC follow-up appointment



Results

Figure 3. Study patients

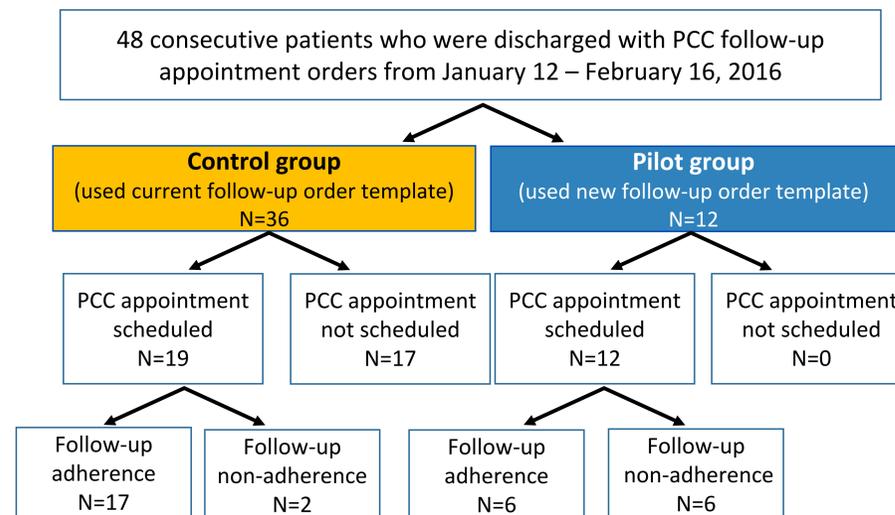


Figure 4. Scheduled PCC appointments and the adherence rate to the follow-up appointments between the control and the pilot study group

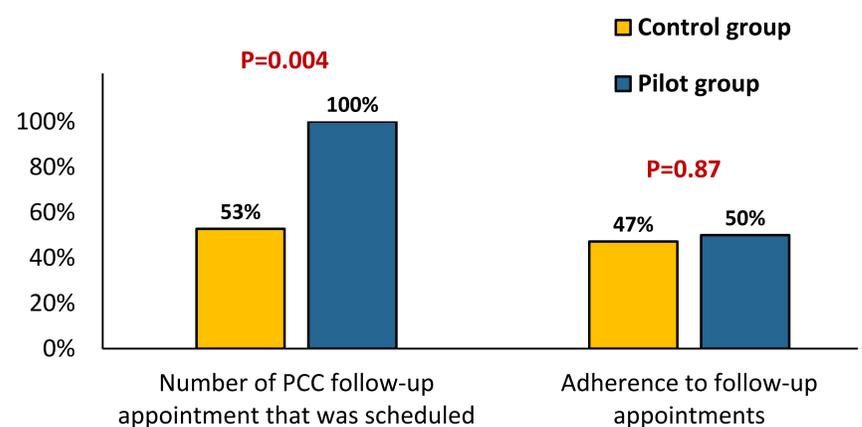


Figure 5. Etiologies of PCC appointments scheduling failure in the control group (N=17)

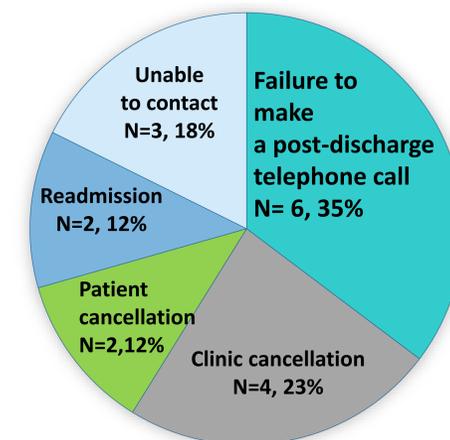
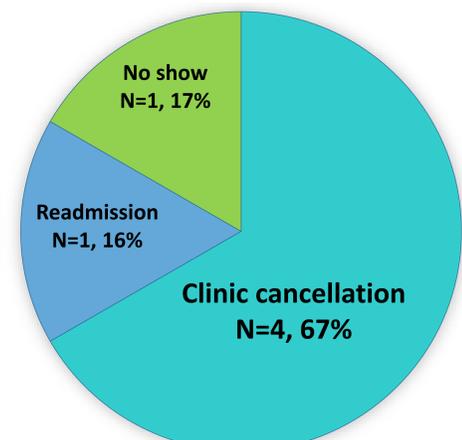


Figure 6. Etiologies of non-adherence to follow-up appointments in the pilot group (N=6)



Conclusions

- The current process is only able to schedule 53% of follow-up appointment. Of 17 appointments that were not scheduled, 35% were because of failure to make a post-discharge telephone call
- By making PCC follow-up appointment before discharge, our project succeeded in ensuring that the PCC follow-up appointments were made (100%) when compared to current process (53%)
- However, there was no improvement in adherence to follow-up appointment. This is explained by high rate (67%) of PCC cancellation by providers as the follow-up appointment was deemed no longer necessary
- Future improvement project should aim to improve the appropriate use of follow-up appointment order