

CAHE JC Critically Appraised Article Summary

Journal Club Details

Date of submission	October 2008
Journal Club location	Western Mental Health
JC Facilitator	Gabrijela Baltic

Clinical Scenario

What is an effective strategy to improve attendance rates to therapy appointments of patients with mental health diseases?

Review Question/PICO/PACO

- P Patients between 18-64 years who seek mental health services
- I Any intervention to increase attendance?
- C No intervention
- O Attendance to appointments

Article/Paper

Shoffner J, Staudt M, Marcus S, Kapp S. Using telephone reminders to increase attendance at psychiatric appointments: findings of a pilot study in rural Appalachia. *Psychiatric Services* 2007; 58(6): 872-875.

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Article Methodology:	Pilot Study
Returned JC on:	27 October 2008
By CAHE staff member:	Lucylynn M. Lizarondo

Ques No.	Yes	Can't Tell	No	Comments
1	✓			The study asked a clearly focused question: Population: Patients from a community mental health centre in rural Appalachia Intervention: Telephone reminders – calls by the therapist or calls by a staff member Outcomes: attendance in intake or therapy appointments
2	✓			A randomised controlled trial is always preferable as it eliminates or minimises bias. However, the questions were still addressed by using the research design applied in this study. Is it worth continuing: YES
3			✓	One of the limitations of this study is the method by which the patients were selected. The pilot study included only 2 rural clinics and only one therapist at each clinic participated in the study and only their patients were included. This limits the generalisability of the findings.
4	✓			The 'exposure' in this study would refer to the telephone reminder given to patients. The reminder messages seemed to be consistent in all patients (participants) and were made the day before the actual appointment.
5		✓		The following were recorded for each participant: whether a phone call was made, who made the call, outcome of the call, attendance to the appointment. Similar information was recorded for all the scheduled appointment. Whilst this is a reliable way of collecting data, there was no information about the assessor (the person responsible for recording the information). Non-blinding of the assessor could potentially create bias in the recording of information.
6A 6B			✓	Several variables were considered in the analysis, such as number of appointments, the person who made the call, type of appointment, clinic site and whether the patient is a child or adult. The authors have reported that they did not control the amount of time patients had to wait for their appointments. Whilst they may have considered several variables, other factors such as characteristics of patients could have possibly affected the rate of appointment keeping.
7				This study did not require follow-up as it involved only one time phone reminder and looking at whether or not patients attended their appointments.

Ques No.	Yes	Can't Tell	No	Comments
8				<p>Results were presented using percentages and p values.</p> <p>Main results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patients who were reached directly by their therapists were significantly more likely to keep their appointments compared to those who were not contacted. The other phone call conditions (therapist indirect, staff direct, staff indirect) had no significant effect on appointment keeping. The rate of appointment keeping, however, depended on the type of appointment – 94% for intake appointment and 89% for therapy appointment. <p><u>Bottom line result:</u> Direct contact with therapist may increase psychiatric appointment keeping by patients.</p>
9	✓			The study has presented p values to determine significant differences between interventions (exposure).
10		✓		The evidence obtained from this research design is relatively weak, considering its level in the hierarchy of research evidence in addition to some significant flaws in the methodological quality. This simple intervention, however, could be a cost effective means of improving compliance but supplementing it with a large, randomised trial would be required.
11		✓		The subjects covered in this study have not been sufficiently described to determine applicability in the local population.
12			✓	There isn't much evidence regarding the benefits of telephone reminders to allow definite conclusions to be drawn. Studies related to improving attendance rate have dealt on other strategies such as simple orientation-type letter or SMS or text-based prompts.