

Reducing missed outpatient appointments at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney

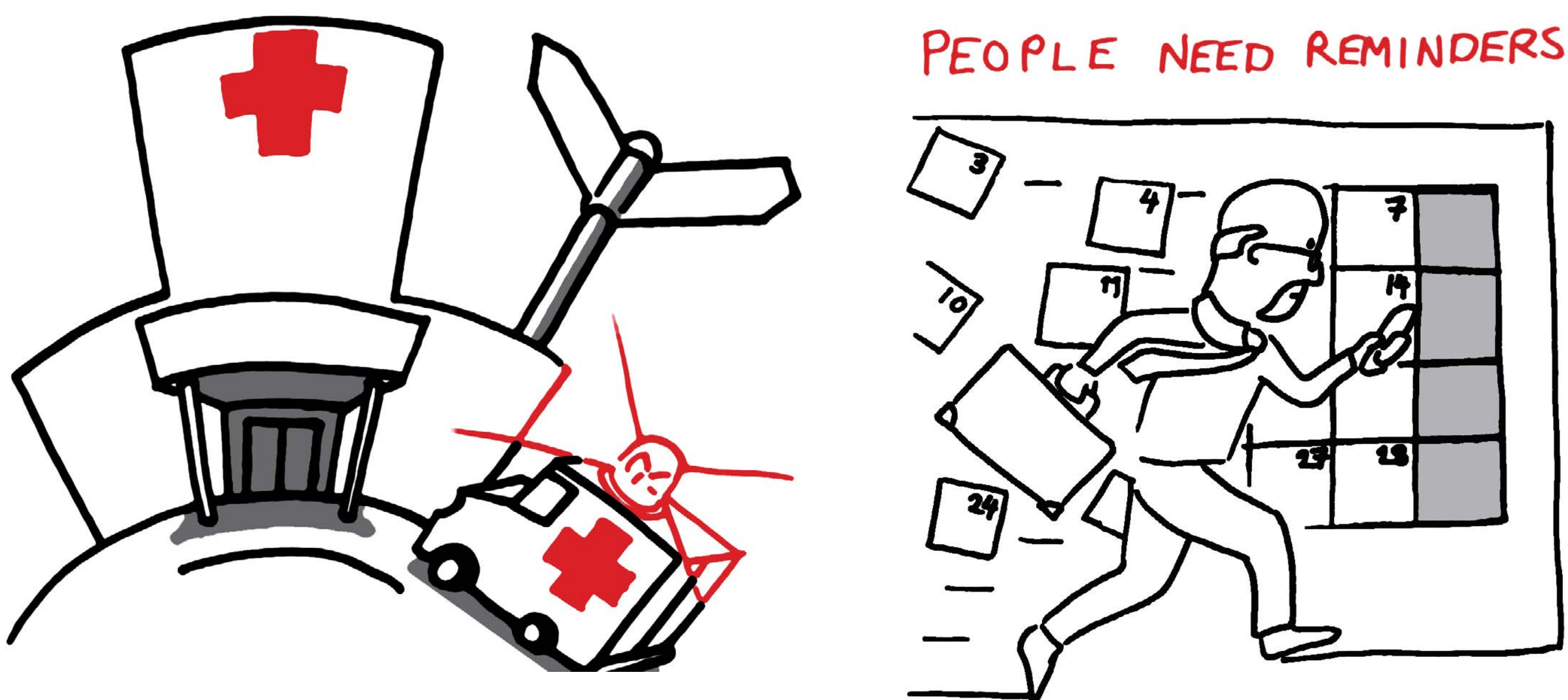
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INTRODUCTION

- Each year, over 14% of hospital appointments are missed at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney (SVH)
- This costs the hospital around \$500,000 with each missed appointment costing \$125 +
- Missed appointments mean longer patient wait times and inefficient use of hospital resources
- Patients receive reminder text messages, but there are still significant number of missed appointments

AIM

- To reduce missed hospital outpatient appointments by trialing different text message variation



BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS

- 30% of appointment no shows are due to people living busy lives and simply forgetting to attend their appointments¹
- The 'intention-action' gap means patients may intend to attend their appointment but do not follow through
- Text message reminders are helpful but BI research shows that the content of the message really matters
- People care about the cost implications of missing a hospital appointment

INTERVENTION

- Designed seven new reminder messages using evidence from UK and BI literature
- Randomised controlled trial with 8,143 text messages sent out over a 5 month period

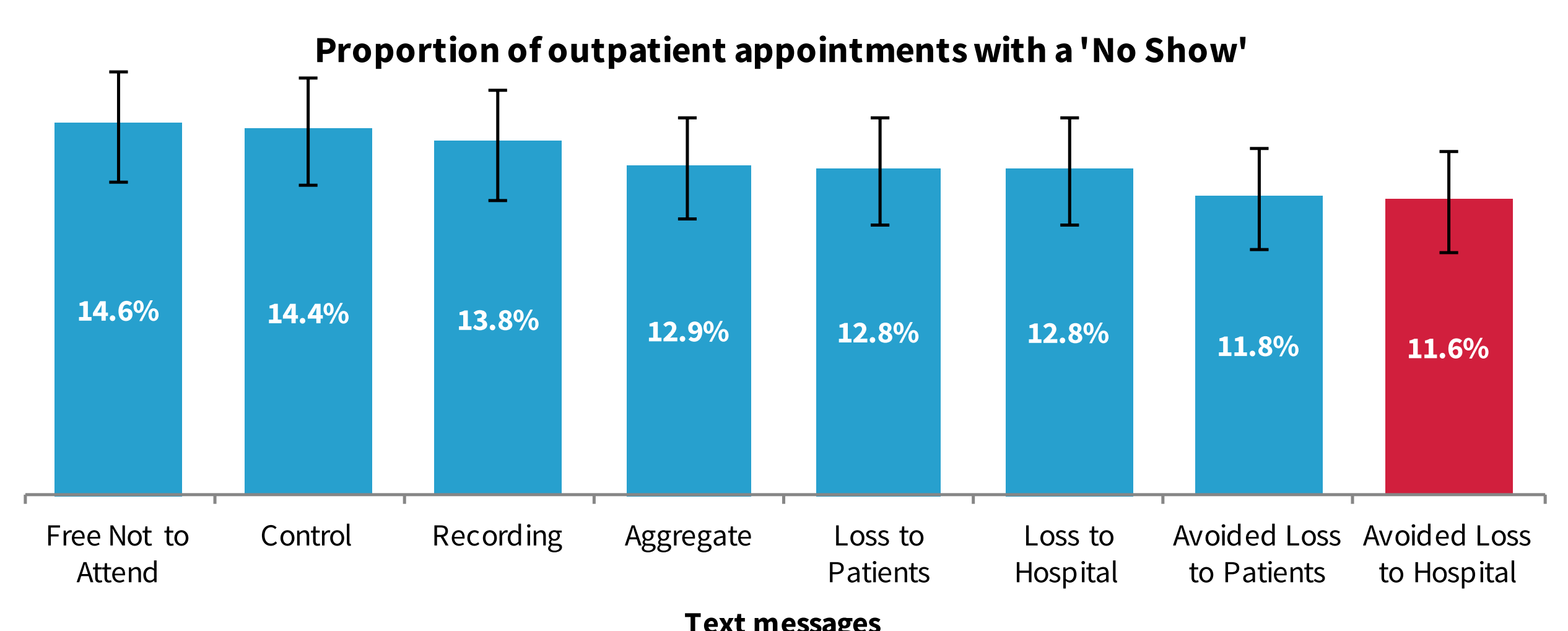


SO WE TRIALLED DIFFERENT MESSAGES...

NAME	MESSAGE
Control	You have an appointment with Dr [XXXXX] in [Clinic XXXXXX] on [Date] at [Time]. For enquiries, call 8382-3150. Do not reply.
Aggregate loss to hospital	Last year the hospital lost \$500,000 due to lost appointments.
Loss to hospital	If you do not attend the hospital loses \$125.
Loss to patients	If you do not attend the hospital loses \$125 that can be used to treat other patients.
Avoided loss to hospital	If you attend the hospital will not lose the \$125 we lose when a patient does not turn up.
Avoided loss to patients	By attending the hospital will not lose the \$125 that we lose when a patient does not turn up. This money will be used to treat other patients.
Free not to attend	You are free not to attend but please call us on 8382-3150 if you need to cancel or rearrange.
Recording	Please attend or call 8382-3150 to cancel/rearrange, or we will record as a missed appt.

RESULTS

- Recipients of the 'avoided loss to hospital' message were more likely to attend their appointment than patients in the control group
- Roll out of this message would save SVH \$67,000 pa - If SVH had all patient's phone numbers, the savings would be an estimated \$97,000 pa
- Running a second phase of the trial to test additional messages based on sub-group analysis



¹Neal RD, Hussain-Gambles M, Allgar VL, Lawlor DA, Dempsey O. Reasons for and consequences of missed appointments in general practice in the UK: questionnaire survey and prospective review of medical records. BMC Fam Pract 2005;6:47-52.