

# Women's Cancer Screening Collaborative



## Case Study: Using SMS reminders for improved recall and reminder

Vicki Coombes, Practice Manager at Star Street Medical in Macksville has led the introduction of an SMS recall and reminder service, she talks to us about the benefits Star Street have seen from this quality improvement initiative:

### What was the situation prior?

Prior to joining the collaborative all of our reminders were via letter, and our recalls were via phone call. This approach was both costly and time consuming – people often won't answer their phone during work hours so staff had to make multiple calls to finalise a recall.

### What quality improvement changes did you make?

- I firstly met with GPs in the Practice to ensure all GPs were inputting their recalls/reminders appropriately and understood the difference.
- We asked patients through patient update forms and notes on reminder letters to opt out of SMS reminders.
- I met with Administrative staff to develop a protocol for recalls and reminders.
- We had an online training session with IT Medical to fine tune our understanding and procedures.
- We set up SMS templates within Medical Director for each GP, so the process of sending an SMS takes only seconds for multiple patients.

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## What were the benefits to your practice of making this change?

The impact with recalls particularly was quite significant. Instead of multiple telephone calls and/or leaving messages for patients, we are receiving almost instant response to text messages as most people appear to check for messages at breaks.

With recalls, we send a second message, if this is not answered then we telephone and finally if this fails, we send a registered letter. (Unless the matter is critical, then we follow up with same day telephone).

***This has made significant time and financial savings. For reminders, I have reduced the number of monthly reminder letters from approximately 100 down to 30.*** The remainder are going by SMS.

***For recalls, we are finding we are receiving a response to the initial SMS within hours in most cases. This has significantly reduced the time spent on the telephone by receptionists.*** Although the patient receives a generic SMS, they mostly know why we are calling, and this saves reception time explaining the call and having to make multiple calls to home or mobiles.

We have only been using this new system for 2 months, however, in that time ***we have had very positive feedback from patients.***



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