



Exploring Reasons for Missed Appointments

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Objectives

- Describe major findings from a study designed to explore reasons for a high percentage of missed appointments in a public health Women's clinic.
- Discuss some of the challenges associated with practice-based research.
- Link external trends as the adoption of electronic health records and public health accreditation to the conduct of practice-based research.

First AHD research collaboration

- Knox County Health Department (KCHD) and the University of Tennessee (UT) Department of Public Health formed an ***Academic Health Department (AHD)*** to:
 - Bridge the gap between public health practice & academic public health.
 - Enhance public health education, training, research, & services, all for the purposes of improving community health.

Practice-based research

- Aims to answer ***practice-based questions***
- Hallmark is the ***rapid-cycle translation of research findings into specific actionable recommendations.***
- ***Accomplished by collaborations*** between public health practitioners & academicians.

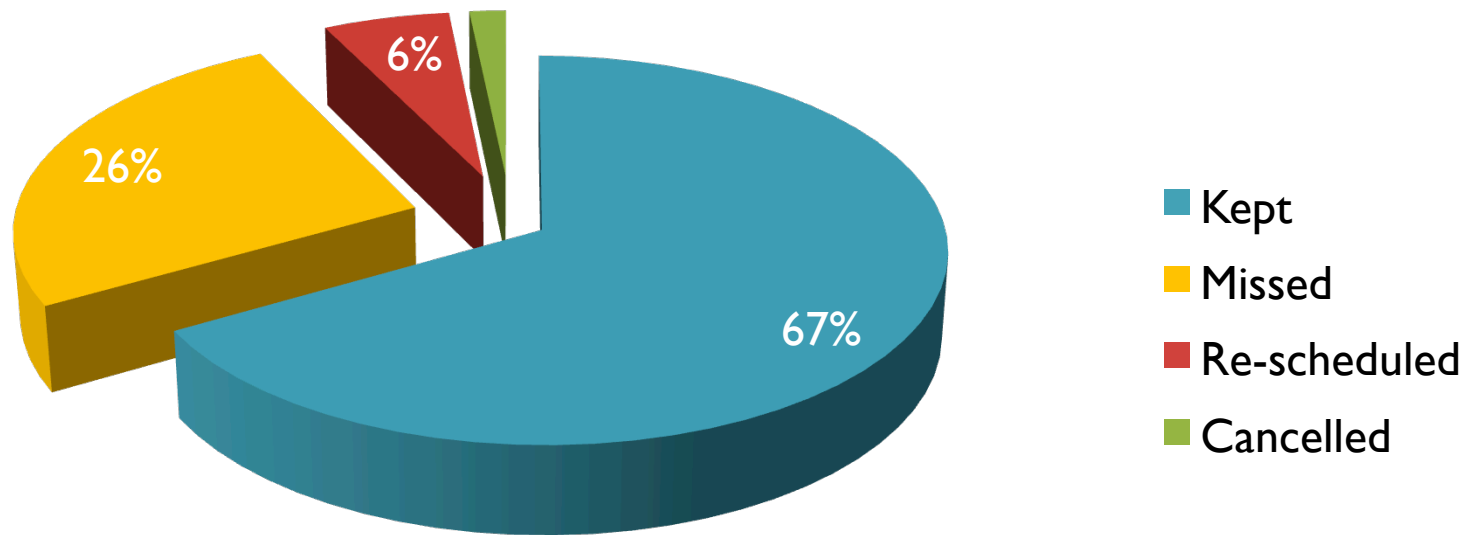
Description of problem

- Number of women who do not keep scheduled appointments is problematic for several reasons:
 - Staffing
 - Operational efficiency
 - Great demand for appointments
 - Consequences to women who miss appointments & do not re-schedule.

Research question

The purpose of this study is to answer the question: ***What are the factors that contribute to women not keeping a scheduled appointment?***

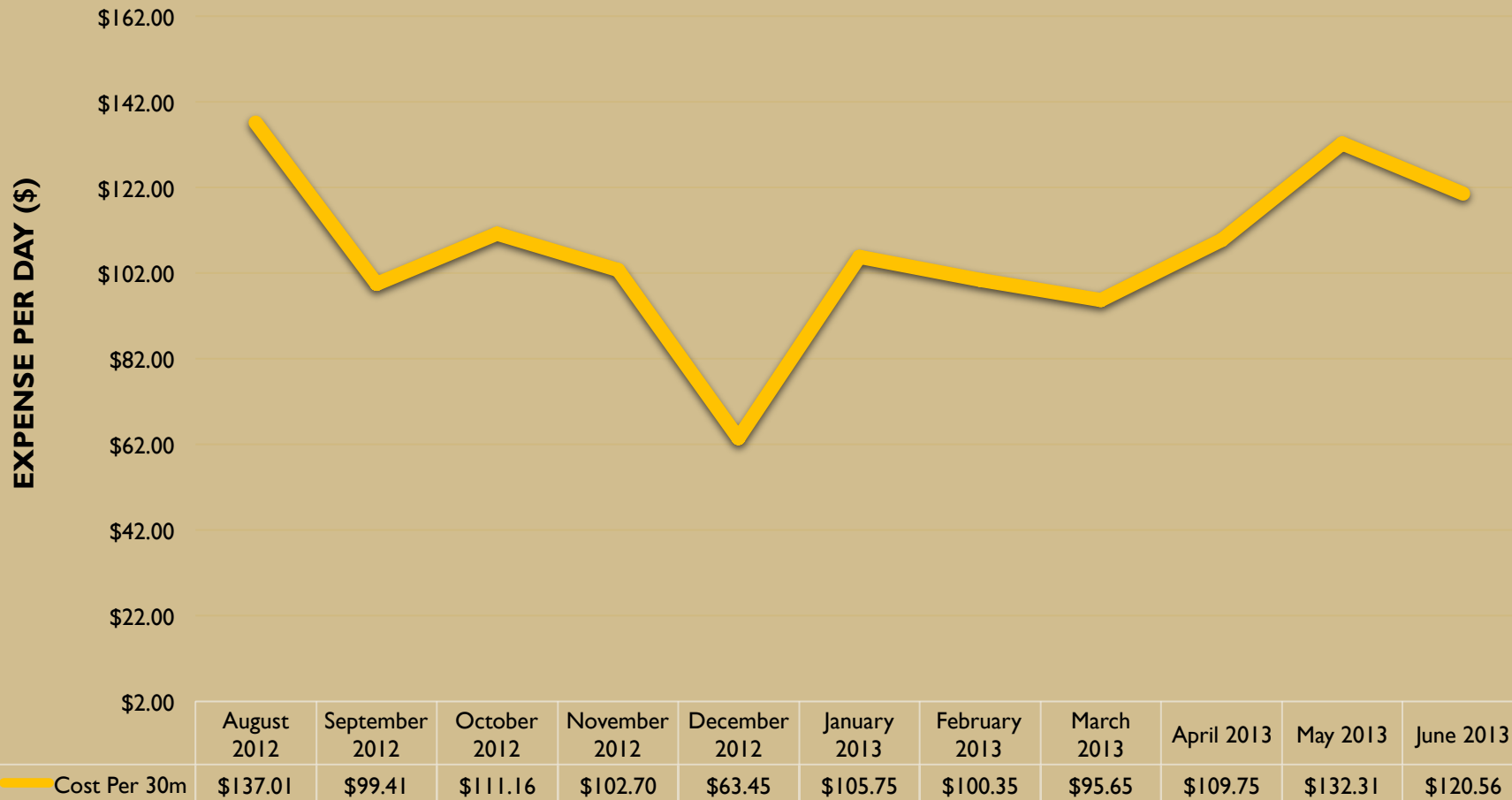
Scope of problem



Operational impact

Estimated cost of missed appointments

Estimated Cost of Missed Appointments Per Day



Interviews: Respondent profile

28 women were interviewed:

23 English-speaking

5 Spanish-speaking

Average age: 31.8 years (19-49 years)

Major themes

- Personal scheduling challenges
- Challenges keeping appointments
- Clinic barriers
- Motivators
- Improvement suggestions

“It’s a big factor because my husband don’t always get to work, and with insurance and 401k and just different things that come out of your check, if I miss a day it’s really hard on me.”

Transportation

“Oh, I definitely have to consider on how I’m getting here and have the money for the bus. I have no license, so, you know, it’s a challenge sometimes, you know, to have the funds and, you know – and to be here on time.”

Care-giving responsibilities

“Well, I take care of my mother, so make sure she doesn’t have any appointments. And then there’s also people that are not related that also help take care when they need me to go to store; they’re elderly, so I go to the store for them, so I do a lot for a lot of people. I work 7 days a week. So when I’m not at work I’m doing something for somebody.”

Work and hours of operation

“Okay. Well, I work 12-hour shifts. I work like 6:45 to 7 – usually somewhere around 7:15 by the time I get off, and then, as a matter of fact, on Wednesdays I work 6 a.m. to 7:15 p.m., so the Health Department isn’t open when I go to work, and they’re not open when I get off from work, so I have to do that on a Friday.”

Motivators

“It helps me because that way I can improve myself. If not, my whole life, I will be left without anything. I am not from over here. I am from Guatemala. I want to provide a life for my daughters that I have there. That is why I want to come to the appointment and remind myself to come so I can feel well... No more babies. That I have to send money over there, and I don't have enough for here, that is why”

Of note

- Women were consistently complimentary of KCHD & staff. Many are long-standing clinic patients.
- Women were cognizant of the adverse impact of missing an appointment on the clinic's operation, other clinic patients, & the hassle of re-scheduling an appointment.

Actionable items from study findings

- Modify phone scheduling processes, as indicated
- Add text and possibly phone reminders
- Assess feasibility of expanding clinic hours
- Evaluate process flow for delivery of NP services
- Develop logic model & evaluation plan for scheduling processes

Discussion

Reality of practice-based research is available data not necessarily designed for research purposes.

Process improvement

Specify and define data elements

Develop initial data collection, reporting and evaluation specifics

More than research



- Establishing foundation for ongoing work
- Relationship-building
- Reflects accreditation standards

Questions?

