



For Immediate Release

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Automated Notification System Reminds Clients of Endoscopy Appointments

(Happy Valley-Goose Bay, NL): Labrador-Grenfell Health is announcing the launch of its Automated Notification System (ANS). The system provides a client with a telephone reminder several days before their scheduled endoscopy appointment. The reminder allows clients to confirm or cancel their appointment, while allowing other clients to be booked in unused or cancelled appointment slots.

“Labrador-Grenfell Health has been working with the other Regional Health Authorities in the province to launch a system that will have significant benefits for clients,” said Tony Wakeham, President and Chief Executive Officer. “By reducing the number of missed or forgotten appointments, we can improve access to clients who require endoscopy procedures, such as colonoscopies, and achieve efficiencies in the manner in which such services are provided.”

A reminder will be sent to the telephone number that is listed with Labrador-Grenfell Health. Clients are encouraged to ensure that the health authority has current information in the system. Clients will need to follow a set of instructions to confirm their appointment date and time.

The Automated Notification System is a province-wide initiative. Other Regional Health Authorities have implemented the same system in recent weeks. The Regional Health Authorities will complete an evaluation of the system to help determine the future use for this technology and whether the system will be expanded to other services. As part of the evaluation, feedback from clients and staff will be gathered during the implementation phase.

For more detailed information on the Automated Notification System, see *Frequently Asked Questions* in the attached background document, or go to www.lghealth.ca

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: AUTOMATED NOTIFICATION SYSTEM (ANS)

What is an automated notification system?

The ANS is an electronic system that will be used to provide telephone reminders to patients of scheduled endoscopy appointments.

How does it work?

This reminder system will be used to call patients for an upcoming scheduled endoscopy appointment 5-7 days in advance. The call will be made to a patients' primary telephone number listed with the regional health authority. Patients will be able to confirm or cancel the scheduled appointment. If the patient cancels the appointment, they will be asked to contact/call the number on their appointment letter within two working days of cancelling the appointment.

What time will the ANS make reminder calls to patients?

Initially, reminder calls will be made Monday to Friday between 5 and 9 p.m. In a survey conducted by the Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) Statistics Agency, people said they would like to receive their health appointment reminder calls during the weekdays. Over time, modifications may be made to this schedule based on patient feedback.

What name or number will show up on my telephone caller ID?

A telephone number and the name of the health authority i.e. (Central Health, Eastern Health, Western Health or Labrador-Grenfell Health) will appear on the telephone caller ID. If the patient returns a call to this number, they will reach an information only mailbox advising that they received a telephone reminder for a scheduled appointment. The telephone number will be beneficial for those patients who do not have a voice mail and missed the calls. A patient will not be able to leave a message at this number as it will be an information only mailbox.

What information will be provided during the call?

The day, date, time, and location of the scheduled appointment (i.e. the hospital or site) will be identified within the message. Patients will be reminded to bring their non-expired MCP card to their appointment.

When I receive a reminder call, how will I confirm or cancel the appointment?

At the start of the reminder call, the system will say/indicate who the call is for and you will be asked to confirm your identity (i.e. this is a call for 'John Smith'). Once you have confirmed your name, you will be asked to press 1 to indicate you will be attending your scheduled appointment.

What will happen if I cannot attend and have to cancel my appointment?

If a patient cannot attend their scheduled appointment, they will be asked to press 2 and then asked to reconfirm this selection. The patient will then be advised to contact the booking office or the telephone number on their appointment letter to discuss their options.

The original appointment letter notes that regional health authorities have cancellation policies. In some instances, a patient may be able to reschedule their appointment given a valid reason; however, in some instances, a patient may need to return to a physician for a new referral. Unless a patient has a valid reason to reschedule their appointment, they may need to obtain a new referral from their physician.

What happens if I make a mistake by pressing a wrong selection during the call?

If a patient accidentally presses a wrong selection during the reminder call, there are several opportunities to return to the main menu to correct the selection.

I have a voice mail and seldom answer my telephone; what happens in that case?

If there is no answer and there is a voice mail, the system is configured to leave a message on the voice mail.

What happens if I am not at home when the system calls with a reminder, but someone else answers the phone?

If the patient is not at home, the system will ask if the person who answers the phone can take a message for the patient. If yes is indicated, the appointment reminder is provided.

How many calls will the ANS make to each patient?

The system is currently configured to make up to three calls to each patient to confirm their appointment. The calls are made on the same evening within a short timeframe.

If a voice mail or message manager answers on the first call, the system is configured to leave a message indicating the day, date, time, and location of a scheduled appointment. On a daily basis, the booking clerk will receive a system report indicating which patients confirmed or cancelled their appointments and which patients could not be contacted.

If I was booked for an appointment with short notice will/ receive a reminder call?

No, if an appointment is booked with short notice, most often a reminder call will not be received by the patient. The appointment information will need to be in the scheduling system a minimum of five to seven days prior to the appointment for the ANS to make the reminder call.

What happens if I would like to receive the reminder call on my cellular telephone/smartphone?

The reminder calls will be made to the primary telephone number listed with each regional health authority. Most health authorities collect two telephone numbers, but just the primary number will be used for purposes of automated appointment reminders. If the patient prefers to be contacted by cellular/smartphone they should ask the health authority to list their cell number as the primary telephone number – in some instances this number may be referred to as the home number. It is very important to ensure that telephone numbers with a health authority are up-to-date.

Is there an option for notification by methods other than telephone?

No, at the present time reminders will be by telephone only, however text and email notification is being explored. A recent survey indicated that a majority of respondents preferred telephone reminders. The system does, however, have the capability for other types of notifications and these options are currently being explored.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Why is an automated notification system being implemented at this time?

In keeping with modern appointment scheduling practices, this system is being implemented to remind patients of their upcoming appointment(s). Sometimes patients forget appointments or experience unplanned life events which result in missed appointments. The ANS will provide a telephone reminder several days before a patient's scheduled appointment so that patients may confirm their appointment and carry out any preparations needed before the appointment. If a patient is unable to attend the appointment this will allow other patients to be booked in any unfilled appointment slots.

The number of 'no-shows' or missed appointments are a concern to all four regional health authorities in the province. When a person doesn't show at the appointed time, or doesn't give sufficient cancellation notice, there is no time to offer that appointment to someone else. This results in underutilized staff and equipment resources and lost procedure times that can never be recouped.

Additionally, when the 'no-show' patient later makes contact to request to be re-booked, it can impact the waiting list and wait times for all patients.

Will the automated notification system be used for all appointment areas?

No, at this point the ANS is being piloted in the twelve Endoscopy Services Departments throughout the four regional health authorities in the province. Initially, it will be used to contact endoscopy patients (such as colonoscopy, upper GI's) by phone; however, a review of this project will determine potential areas and methods of expanded use, such as text or email messaging appointment reminders and scheduling.

As a part of the ongoing evaluation, patient feedback will be gathered throughout the implementation.

How many endoscopy appointments are there per year?

There are approximately 40,000 endoscopy appointments annually in the province, with approximately half of these appointments at Eastern Health.

Will the ANS system be implemented in all regions of the province at the same time?

No, the ANS will be implemented in the Central Health region in early October, followed shortly thereafter by Eastern Health, Western Health and Labrador-Grenfell Health will implement ANS in the following weeks and a public announcement will follow.