

# Patient engagement may not drive return to in-person visits

July 8 2021

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(HealthDay)—Patient engagement strategies appear to yield few return

visits upon reopening during COVID-19 for patients who cancelled in-person care during the earlier portion of the pandemic, according to a research letter published online June 30 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Anne R. Cappola, M.D., from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, and colleagues conducted a randomized clinical trial to determine whether targeted messaging could improve the return to in-person visits for 11,120 [adult patients](#) who had canceled in-person appointments, procedures, or surgical procedures (March 9 through June 7, 2020) and had not rescheduled. Patients were randomly assigned to no letter versus letter (1:9), tailored versus standard letter (1:1), or electronic versus mail letter (1:1).

The researchers found that in-person return visits within one month were low and did not significantly differ between [patients](#) who did or did not receive a letter (5.0 versus 4.1 percent). However, patients receiving any letter had a significantly higher percentage of telemedicine visits and future scheduled visits within one month (telemedicine visits: 1.3 versus 0.4 percent; future visits: 14.4 versus 11.7 percent). Compared with standard letters, patients receiving the tailored letter scheduled more visits (15.3 versus 13.4 percent). Patients with a [household income](#) below the median were significantly more likely to schedule a visit when mailed a letter versus when they received an electronic [letter](#).

"Strategies to improve patient engagement, with attention to message framing and delivery mode, are needed to encourage continuity of health care in the era of COVID-19," the authors write.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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