

## Health Headlines

For Immediate Release  
July 22, 2010



### “Don’t Be A No Show” Awareness Campaign

VA Doctor Collaborates with VA Graphic Artist to Bring Awareness to Veterans

BRONX, NY – A dilemma facing all VA Medical Centers, and an avoidable inconvenience to other patients, is the alarming rise in patient “No Shows.” This is a name used to describe patients with previously scheduled appointments that do not show up at their appointed time. Sometimes “No Shows” occur for very legitimate, unavoidable reasons, but often it is due to carelessness or a simple misunderstanding of the impact this action has on the clinic staff and the other

patients waiting for appointments. Put quite simply, “No Shows” are a serious detriment to clinic operations, patient care and general productivity.

Dr. Daniel MacDonald, Dental/Research Service, James J. Peters VA Medical Center, recognized that the rising “No Show” rate was having a negative impact on his clinic and the clinics of many of his colleagues. He sympathized with patients whose appointments were unnecessarily prolonged by backlogs in scheduling caused by “No Shows.”

“When I schedule a surgery, it can take anywhere from 1.5-2.5 hours to complete the procedure,” said, MacDonald. “A “No Show” is devastating to my schedule and creates missed opportunities for patients waiting for needed care.”

Dr. MacDonald felt an effective approach to reduce “No Shows” would be to develop an awareness campaign. He conceived of a poster that would alert patients that such behavior harms everyone: the clinician, staff, other patients, and the hospital. In an effort to develop a meaningful campaign, he teamed up with Yang Zhao, Chief of Medical Media and an experienced graphic artist, with a background in private-sector marketing campaigns. Together they created an attractive “No Show” poster, pictured above, to be displayed in all waiting areas of medical center.

The resulting poster incorporates patriotism reflected by the American flag in the background, an eagle symbolic of the warrior flying home and the crest of the Veterans Administration located in the path of the flying eagle. The text reads:

“Don’t be a No Show” and points out, in bulleted form, the negative consequences of being a “No Show” patient. It also provides instructions on how to properly cancel an appointment. The emphasis is intended to convey that if done properly, the patient’s inability to keep an appointment will become an “opportunity” for patients who are waiting to be seen.

“Veterans have earned the best care and services the VA can provide,” stated MacDonald, “however, Veteran patients also share a responsibility to their fellow Veterans, to cancel appointments far enough in advance for the staff to make effective use of the available time.” This is the message that is conveyed by these posters.

Early indications are that the poster campaign is having a positive impact. Clinics are reporting fewer missed appointments and increasing numbers of calls from patients who are cancelling appointments. Time will tell if “awareness” equals productivity, but certainly we are moving in the right direction.

For more information related to this story or the James J. Peters VA Medical Center, please contact Jim Connell, Public Affairs Officer, at 718.584.9000, Ext. 6620.

#####