Nudging in health: the UK experience

11 May 2015

Dan Berry
UK Government Department of Health: behavioural insights team
Email: daniel.berry@dh.gsi.gov.uk
Twitter: dan_berry79
What I’ll talk about

1. Why the UK government and National Health Service (NHS) is increasing applying behavioural insights
2. Examples from across health services and public health
3. A game…
About 1 in every 10 NHS outpatient appointment is missed.

This leads to poor patient care.

It wastes NHS resources: one estimate put this at £225 million.

Your challenge is to reduce missed hospital appointments by a quarter - 
- *without* spending any money
- *without* retraining staff or introducing complex system changes
- *without* penalising patients
Appt at St Barts Hospital on Sep 26 at 2.30. To cancel or rearrange call the number on your appointment letter.

We are expecting you at St Barts Hospital on Sep 26 at 2.30. 9 out of 10 people attend. Call 02077673200 if you need to cancel or rearrange.

We are expecting you at St Barts Hospital on Sep 26 at 2.30. Not attending costs NHS £160 approx. Call 02077673200 if you need to cancel or rearrange.

Existing message

Easy Call

Social Norms

Specific Costs

Effect of messages on missed appointments (N = 10,111)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message Type</th>
<th>Percentage of Appointments Missed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing Message</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy Call</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Norms</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Costs</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding how people *actually* behave helps us design effective policy and implementation programmes.

Behavioural insights can inform interventions that are:

- **Cheap**: often optimising existing processes or materials
- **Scalable**: do not require intensive training or system reorganisation
- **Light touch**: limited burden on those who wish to continue as they are
Three examples of nudge interventions targeting patients or the public
Dear Xxxx

We are inviting you to attend your free NHS Health Check.

NHS Health Checks are being offered to people aged between 40 and 74 once every five years.

The check is to assess your risk of developing heart disease, stroke, kidney disease or diabetes. If there are any warning signs, then together we can do something about it.

By taking early action, you can improve your health and prevent the onset of these conditions. There is good evidence for this.

The check should take about 20-30 minutes and is based on straightforward questions and measurements such as age, sex, family history, height, weight and blood pressure. There will also be a simple blood test to measure your cholesterol level.

Following the check, you will receive free personalised advice about what you can do to stay healthy.

Take a look at the enclosed leaflet for more information about the NHS Health Check and how it could benefit you.

Please call the surgery to book your appointment on XXXXXXX.

Yours sincerely

Dr XXXXX

---

Free NHS Health Check
Helping you prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease.

---

New letter

Dear Xxxx

You are due to attend your NHS Health Check.

Please call us on 0300 222 5555 to book your appointment and record the date and time on the slip below.

Take a look at the enclosed information about the NHS Health Check and how it would benefit you.

Yours sincerely

Dr XXXXXXXXXXX

Please record your appointment time and location here and keep this letter safe.

My NHS Health Check is at [location] on [date] at [time]

---

Attendance rate %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>old letter</th>
<th>nudge letter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


DH – Leading the nation’s health and care
Is alcohol affecting your health?

Cutting down on alcohol can reduce your risk of immediate and long-term health harms such as irritable bowel syndrome, breast and bowel cancer and liver disease.

Alcohol self assessment

Answer the following 3 simple questions to find out if your drinking is affecting your health now and how it might affect your health in the future.

Step 1/4
Is alcohol affecting your appearance?

Cutting down on alcohol can reduce your risk of immediate and long term appearance harms such as saggy skin, obesity and premature ageing.

Alcohol self assessment

Answer the following 3 simple questions to find out if your drinking affects what you look like now and how you might look in the future.
**Current NHS prescription form:** state eligibility for free prescription before the honesty declaration

**New NHS prescription form:** honesty declaration first, then state eligibility for free prescription
Three examples of nudge interventions targeting clinicians
The revised chart led to much more accurate information (and less errors)

- **Dose entered correctly**: Existing chart (n=174) vs. Improved chart (n=163)
- **Prescriber’s contact number entered**: Existing chart vs. Improved chart
- **Frequency of medications entered correctly**: Existing chart vs. Improved chart

**Graphs**:
- Green bar: Existing chart (n=174)
- Red bar: Improved chart (n=163)

**Chart Data**
- **King et al. (2014)**
- **Redesigning the ‘choice architecture’ of hospital prescription charts.**
  - Forthcoming.
Test your knowledge…
NHS Organ Donor Register

donorcard

I want to help others to live after my death.
Thank you.

Please join the NHS Organ Donor Register.
Thank you.

Please join the NHS Organ Donor Register.

Every day thousands of people who see this page decide to register.

Join or find out more.
Thank you.

Please join the NHS Organ Donor Register.

Every day thousands of people who see this page decide to register.

Join or find out more.
Thank you.

Please join the NHS Organ Donor Register.

Every day thousands of people who see this page decide to register.

Join » or find out more.  

organdonation.nhs.uk
Service

Thank you.

Please join the NHS Organ Donor Register.

Three people die every day because there are not enough organ donors.

Join or find out more.
Thank you.

Please join the NHS Organ Donor Register.

You could save or transform up to 9 lives as an organ donor.

Join or find out more.
Service

Thank you.

Please join the NHS Organ Donor Register.

If you needed an organ transplant would you have one? If so please help others.

Join or find out more.
Thank you.

Please join the NHS Organ Donor Register.

If you support organ donation please turn your support into action.

Join or find out more.
Proportion of People Registering for Organ Donation, by Treatment

- Control
- People Picture
- Action
- Transform 9
- 1000s of Lives
- Heart Picture
- 3 Die
- Would You

Cabinet Office and DH: Applying Behavioural Insights to Organ Donation: preliminary results from a randomised controlled trial
http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/publications/applying-behavioural-insights-organ-donation
Recap of the benefits

Behavioural insights can inform interventions that are:

- **Cheap**: often optimising existing processes or materials
- **Scalable**: do not require intensive training or system reorganisation
- **Light touch**: limited burden on those who wish to continue as they are

Great framework: search for ‘behavioural insights EAST’
Email Dan Berry: daniel.berry@dh.gsi.gov.uk