# A Study of the Barriers to Attendance amongst Paediatric Patients Scheduled for Appointments at an NHS Ophthalmology Department.

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## INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

- Between April – August 2022, an unusually higher rate of 'did not attends' (DNAs) were noted amongst paediatric ophthalmology patients within the Ophthalmology department in our trust.
- **DNAs** incur **significant costs** to the NHS[1] and in some cases pose a **serious threat** to a young patient's **visual development and sight**[2].
- Therefore, the aim of our study was to identify the causes for non-attendance in paediatric ophthalmology clinics and implement changes to reduce rates and subsequent risk to patients.

## METHODS

**Telephone interview structured proforma designed.**

**Nine categories** of causes for non-attendance established in the proforma.

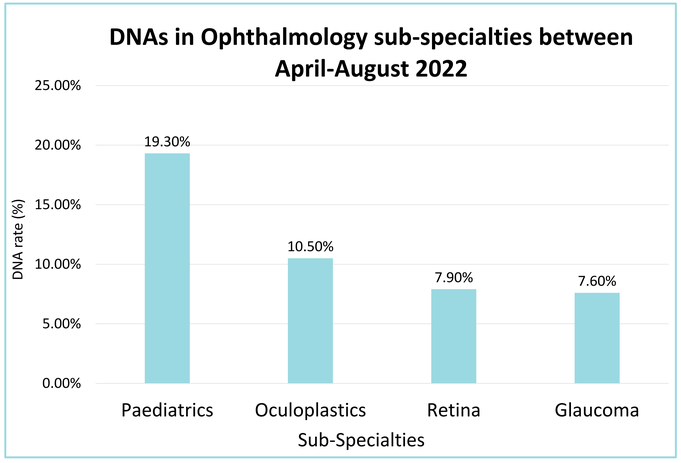
**Electronic patient records (EPR)** - patients who DNA paediatric ophthalmology clinic between 01/04/2022 – 31/08/2022

**Parents or guardians** of identified patients **contacted to conduct brief telephone interview.**

**Data collected** on the **age, gender, ethnicity, deprivation score** and **presenting complaint** for each patient.

**Causes for non-attendance recorded** (including "Other").

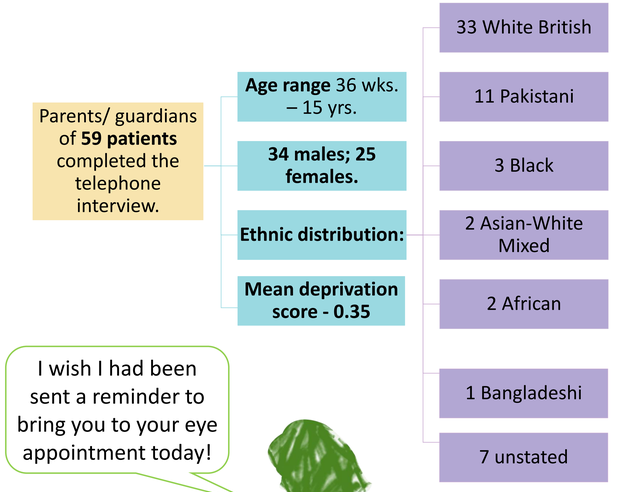
**Data analysed** - Microsoft Excel

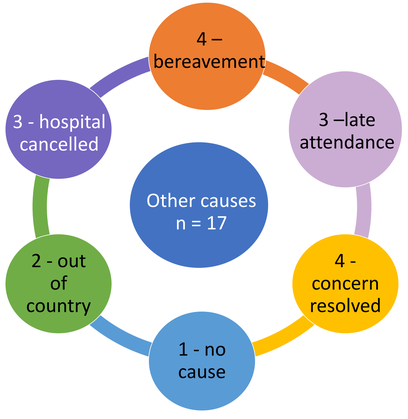



## RESULTS

- **Eighty-eight individuals** identified as parent/guardians of patients who DNA'd were **contacted**. **Fifty-nine (67%) participated** in the telephone interview.
- Common **presenting complaints** comprised of congenital strabismus, congenital visual impairment, reduced vision, recurrent red eyes, congenital cataracts, and indistinct optic disc margins (± headaches) noted by opticians.
- Reported **reasons for non-attendance** included **forgetting the appointment (29%), not being aware of the appointment (24%),** and **child being unwell (5%).** Lack of transport, childcare issues, and work commitments accounted for 3% each. 17 participants reported other causes.

## RESULTS







## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Increased notification of appointments via SMS, emails, automated calls.
- ✓ Ease the process of cancelling/rebooking appointments.
- ✓ Option to opt for patient initiated follow up (PIFU).
- ✓ Emphasis on the cost of appointment[3] and/or the current waiting times.

**References:**
1. NHS England, 2018. Available at: https://www.england.nhs.uk/2018/10/nhs-to-trial-tech-to-cut-missed-appointments-and-save-up-to-20-million/
2. Royal College of Ophthalmologists, 2021. Available at: https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Measuring-follow-up-timeliness-and-risk-for-performance-reporting-improvement-actions-and-targeting-failsafe-procedures-in-England.pdf
3. Hallsworth M, Berry D, Sanders M, Sallis A, King D, Vlaev I, Darzi A. Stating Appointment Costs in SMS Reminders Reduces Missed Hospital Appointments: Findings from Two Randomised Controlled Trials. PLoS One. 2015 Sep 14;10(9):e0137306. Available at: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26366885/