



Funding for SMS messaging

Geoff Schrecker <geoff.schrecker@gmail.com>

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To: tim.donohoe@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Cc: John Lockley <john.lockley@gmail.com>, Kathie Applebee <chairman@nvug.org>, "Punater Avish (SYMONS MEDICAL CENTRE)" <apunater@nhs.net>

Dear Tim,

I am writing to you on behalf of the national user group chairs of the four principal clinical system suppliers.

We first wrote to Jeremy Hunt in December last year to express our serious concerns about the unintended negative consequences of the changes in funding for SMS messaging services. (Copies of the letters and replies are on the EMISNUG website here <http://tinyurl.com/oey7t7c>). As you will see Paul Swiderski has replied to our letters, but does not seem to have appreciated or addressed the issues we are raising. As the responsibility is passing to CCGs with their responsibilities in terms of containing costs this is limiting the use of SMS. As the Crown Commercial Service has already negotiated very effectively the only option for CCGs to contain costs is to reduce usage of the service.

Unfortunately, whilst SMS reduces DNA rates for appointments this does not in itself reduce costs, so there is no additional cost saving to be used to fund the service.

The responses also fail to acknowledge that the potential uses of SMS go well beyond appointment reminder services. However these new uses are still very much in the exploratory stages. If this is not funded and supported then innovation will inevitably be stifled.

As representatives of the users of all four principal clinical systems we strongly believe that this is a service that is "best done once", and so in keeping with the NIB Framework for Action would urge you, even at this late hour, to review this decision.

Yours sincerely,

Geoff Schrecker, Chair EMIS NUG.

Also on behalf of

John Lockley (Chair SystmOne National User Group)
Kathie Applebee (Chair National Vision User Group)
Avish Punater (Chair Microtest User Group)

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<https://twitter.com/GeoffSchrecker>