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5 Telehealth Platform Features Healthcare Needs to Reduce **No-Shows**

The Transformed Relationship Between Patient, Provider and the Digital Age.

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Introduction

For healthcare systems, patient no-shows are much more than just a nuisance; missed appointments are a financial health risk and impact the patient experience. No-shows occur when patients miss a previously booked appointment instead of canceling. By doing so, they're depriving the entire practice of a time slot that could have otherwise been filled (and paid for).

Why do patients miss their appointments, to begin with? There are often a variety of factors at play, but some common threads do exist. For instance, young and unmarried males are more likely to skip appointments, as are young adults with children.

In the behavioral health field, for example, reasons for no-shows can get far more complex. Illnesses such as anxiety, PTSD, and depression can impair patients' motivation and prevent them from getting the help they need.

One another common reason for missed appointments is physical health. Patients with disabilities or illnesses, such as compromised immune systems, face more significant challenges getting to appointments. Access to transportation, distance to providers, work schedules, and access to childcare are some other reasons patients miss appointments.

Whatever the cause, no-shows have the same effect on healthcare everywhere: Reduced revenue and lowered productivity.

So what's the solution?

Traditionally, practices would combat no-shows by having staff members call patients with appointment reminders. While such tactics can be somewhat effective, they place an even bigger burden on staff.

Luckily, **modern practices can reduce no-show rates and staff members' workloads** by embracing telehealth. And that is precisely what we will cover in this ebook.

In this guide, you will find:

→ **What to look** for in a telehealth platform

→ **Five telehealth features** that reduce no-shows

→ **Telehealth best practices**

Rethink Telehealth
The Complete Solution

Put simply, telehealth is the delivery of health-related services remotely via technology. Practices can accomplish this via messaging, video, or audio, depending on the practitioner and patient preferences. But to implement telehealth, a practice must first choose a telehealth platform. This is the software that will make it possible for a practice to use telehealth in the way they want.

Not all telehealth platforms are created equal.
Possible limitations include:

HIPAA COMPLIANCE

Some platforms fail to comply with HIPAA's stringent privacy requirements and can therefore create significant liability for the practices that use them.

GROUP SESSION CAPABILITIES

If a platform cannot host group sessions, both patients and practitioners will miss out on the opportunity to participate in an effective form of treatment via telehealth.

TECH SUPPORT

Some platforms may lack the reliable tech support needed to keep things running smoothly.

LOW-BANDWIDTH CAPABILITIES

For patients who live in rural areas or lack dependable internet, a telehealth platform that doesn't support low-bandwidth connections won't be a viable option.

HANDLING OF WAIT TIMES

There's a reason why clinics stock their waiting rooms with magazines and informational pamphlets — patients like to have something to do while they wait. The same applies to virtual waiting rooms, but some platforms offer nothing but a blank screen.

So what does a complete telehealth platform look like?

Besides filling all the gaps described above, a comprehensive solution will also engage patients outside of their appointments.

This is a crucial step in ensuring that patients stay informed and involved in their treatment at all times. And it can also help patients make it to appointments they might have otherwise missed.

5 Telehealth Platform Features That Reduce No-Shows

We've briefly touched on how a complete telehealth platform can reduce no-shows in ways that their incomplete counterparts can't, but that's just the tip of the iceberg.

If you want your practice to be on the cutting edge of combating no-shows, in this section, we'll highlight five features you need to look for in your telehealth solution.

01
Digital Intake Forms

Many patients dread seeing a new practitioner due to the amount of paperwork they need to complete. It's safe to say that no one gets excited at the prospect of a clipboard full of blank forms.

A telehealth platform with Integrated digital intake forms can greatly improve patients' experience.

Such intake forms are a great alternative to their pen-and-paper counterparts because patients can complete them on any device. Whether patients use a smartphone, tablet, or laptop, they can fill out the forms they need and even send their medical histories by attaching files.
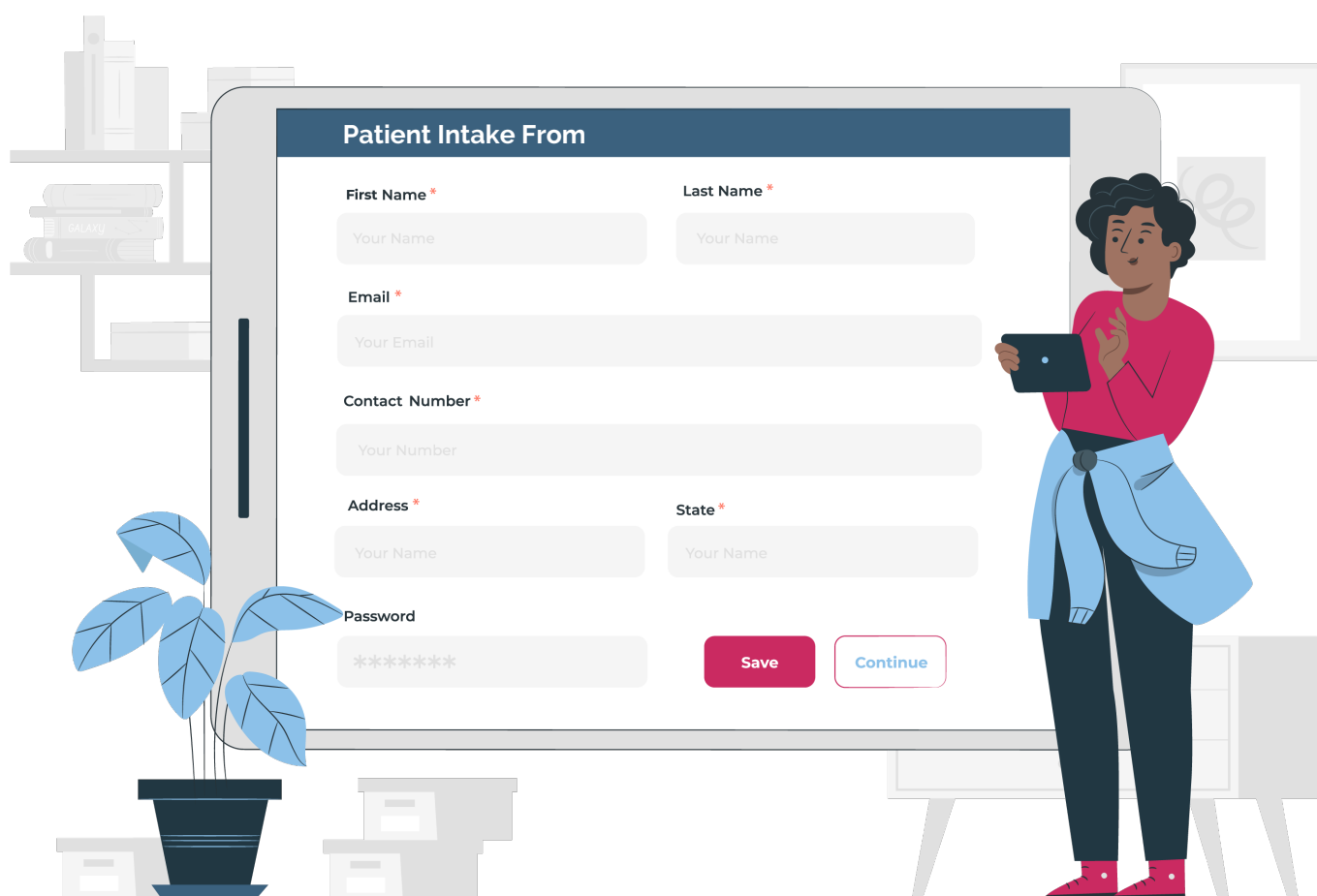
Digital intake forms also have the added benefit of relieving staff of time-consuming busywork. This is made possible by advanced telehealth platforms' ability to integrate with a practice's pre-existing EHR system. This allows the automatic transfer of information from intake forms to corresponding patient charts.

The impact digital intake forms have on patient behavior is measurable. Practices with a telehealth solution **with Integrated digital intake forms have an average patient engagement rate of 80%.** And engaged patients are less likely to miss their appointments.
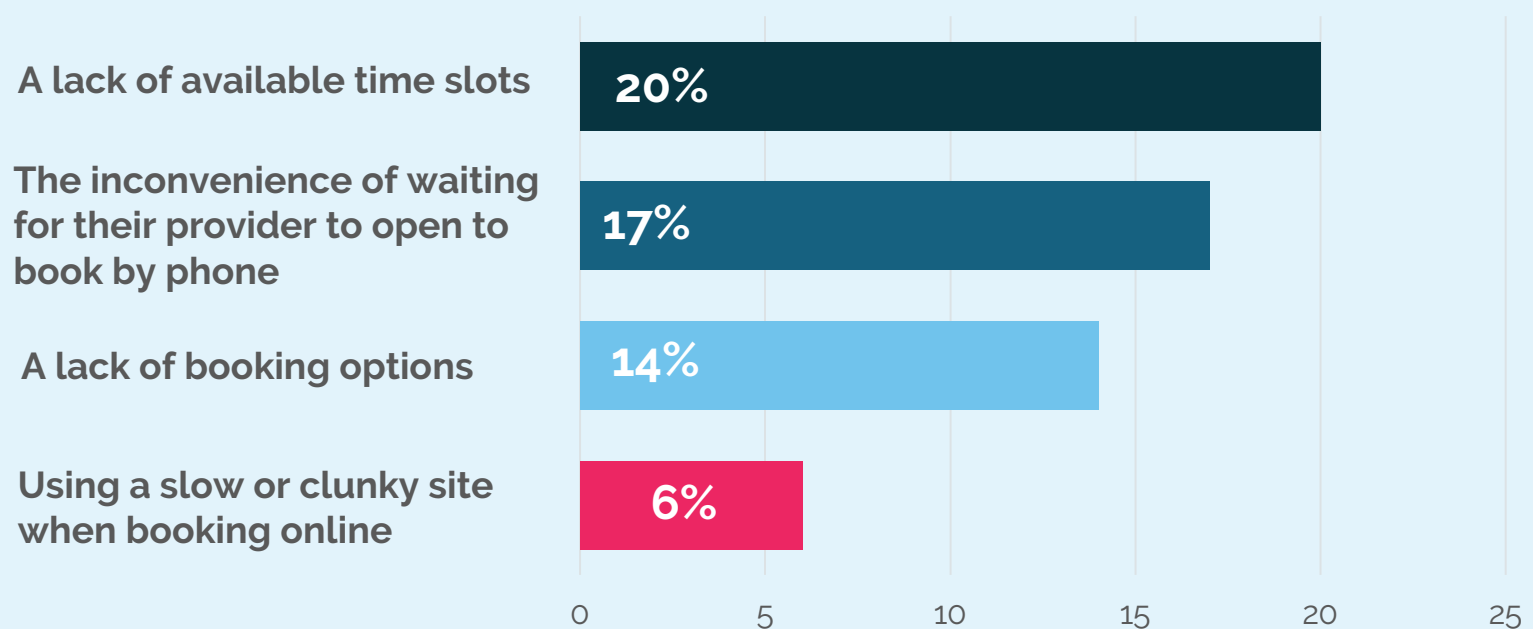
A Patient Appointment Scheduling System

When choosing a telehealth solution, it's essential to consider what it can do to help patients make appointments in the first place.

Consider things from the patients' perspective. A survey conducted by GetApp found that 47% of patients' most significant pain point when scheduling appointments is long hold times when booking by phone:

What's your biggest pain point when scheduling service appointments?

Long hold times when booking by phone	42%
Not enough available time slots	20%
Waiting for provider to open to book by phone	17%
Not enough booking options (e.g., phone, online, text, etc.)	14%
Using a slow or clunky website when booking online	6%

Source: Online Booking Survey
Q: What's your biggest pain point when it comes to scheduling appointments?
n: 217

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A significant percentage also take issue with:

Category	Percentage
A lack of available time slots	20%
The inconvenience of waiting for their provider to open to book by phone	17%
A lack of booking options	14%
Using a slow or clunky site when booking online	6%

While a complete telehealth solution can't create more time slots, it can help with every other one of those pain points. With access to a user-friendly patient appointment scheduling system, patients can:

- ✔ **Schedule and modify appointments on their own accord**
- ✔ **Avoid long hold times altogether**
- ✔ **Make or change appointments at any time, regardless of whether their provider is open or not**
- ✔ **Have a greater number of convenient booking options**
- ✔ **Enjoy a fast, streamlined experience that makes booking appointments a breeze**

And when patients find it easy to reschedule appointments on their own, they'll also be more likely to change time slots rather than skip their appointment entirely.

As a bonus, people with specific behavioral illnesses may feel more comfortable making and rescheduling appointments online than they do over the phone or in person.

In the end, that means fewer no-shows and more revenue for your practice.

03

Patient Appointment Reminders

No-shows happen for a variety of reasons, but sometimes patients simply forget their appointments.

Factor in demanding work hours and difficulties procuring childcare, and it's easy to see why some patients may not remember to attend an appointment they made weeks ago.

To combat this, a **comprehensive telehealth platform should offer intuitive patient appointment reminders**. These reminders should be available in many formats, such as text, email, or phone calls. This will ensure that patients receive their reminders in a format that works for them and their busy lives.

Consider that **90% of text messages are read within just three minutes:**

Messaging Reach

90% of all incoming SMSes are read within 3 minutes
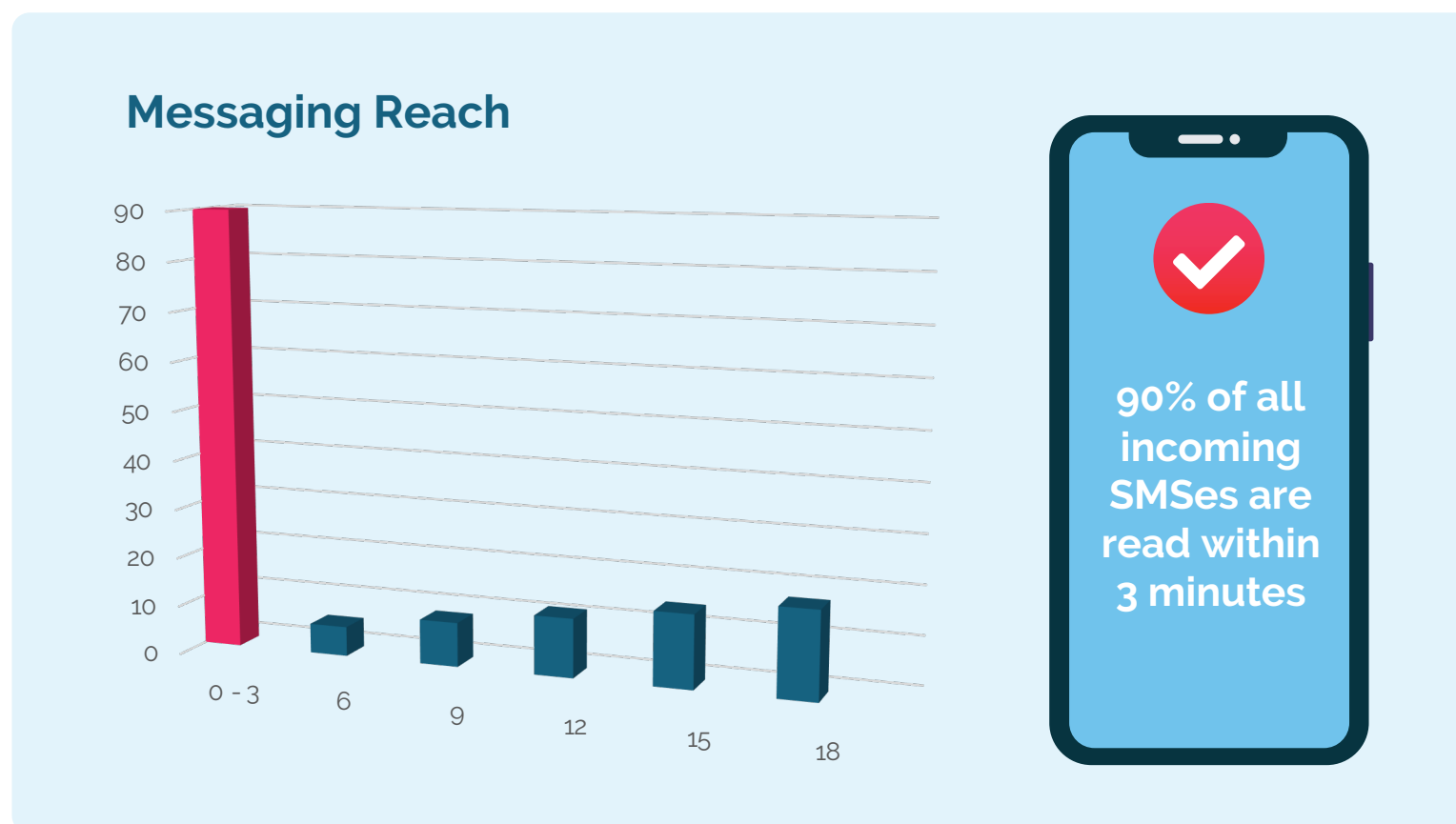
So if patients have the option to receive appointment reminders via text message, most will be more likely to see those reminders and make it to their appointment.

A complete telehealth solution should also provide reminders for all types of appointments, not just those held on the telehealth platform. This includes office visits, video consultations, phone calls, home visits, and more.

04

No-Show Prediction Technology

The most advanced telehealth solutions don't just keep track of no-shows — they go the extra mile by using artificial intelligence (AI) to predict which patients are most likely to no-show or cancel.

That's because when trained with enough data, an **AI-powered algorithm can predict with up to 99% accuracy whether patients will show up to their appointment or not.**

And with a complete telehealth platform that integrates with your practice's EHR, the prediction process is seamless.

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The AI magic happens over the course of a few straight forward steps:
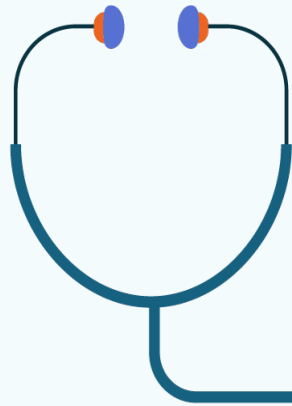
01 Data is gathered from your practice's master scheduling system, including patients' demographic and appointment information

02 The algorithm makes an initial prediction as soon as a patient schedules an appointment.
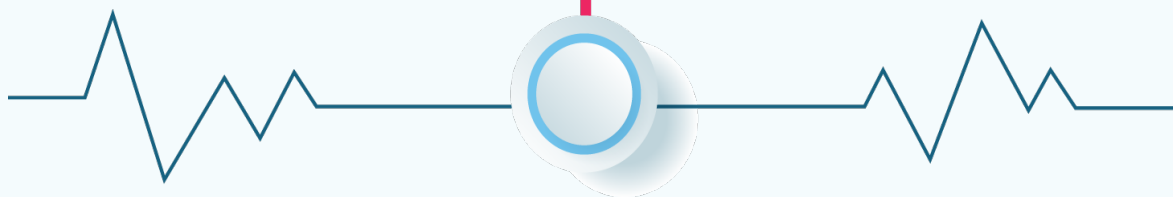
03 Each patient's prediction is fed into your practice's calendar so staff can better prepare for potential no-shows weeks in advance.

04 The telehealth platform automatically works to engage potential no-shows via increased confirmation requests.

With technology on your side, your practice will never be blindsided by no-shows or double-book patients who are likely to show up. Instead, staff can easily determine which patients will attend their appointments and which won't go well in advance.

Plus, you can reduce overall no-shows with the help of additional confirmation requests and appointment reminders.

Reduced Wait Times

In terms of the patient experience, **one of the best benefits of a top-notch telehealth platform is its ability to reduce wait times.**

Here's how: When patients have more control over their appointment scheduling, they're less likely to no-show. And when a practice has fewer no-shows, it also has fewer double-bookings and more efficient scheduling, which translates to shorter wait times.

To truly enhance the user experience, some telehealth platforms will even provide users with an entertaining virtual waiting room.

There, your practice can choose videos that patients can watch while they wait. This creates a Netflix-style environment that helps patients feel more comfortable and encourages them to stay until their appointment begins.

According to **MEND** telehealth user surveys, patients themselves are fans of such digital waiting rooms, and practices that implement them have seen a **15% increase in patient satisfaction.**

Telehealth Best Practices

When integrating telehealth into a practice, there are several tactics you can take to smooth the transition and ensure both patients and staff experience as little stress as possible.

1. Decide Which Type of Services You Will Provide

For Example, before behavioral health practices can offer a wide range of services to their patients, including individual teletherapy, group teletherapy, and telehealth for substance abuse. Each of these services come with their own best practices, and you can learn more with this best practices guide from the Department of Health and Human Services.

2. Announce Upcoming Telehealth Services

Encourage patients to start thinking about whether they'll use your practice's telehealth services by letting them know you'll be implementing a new telehealth platform soon.

3. Introduce Patients to Telehealth and Its Technologies

Whether your patients have used telehealth before or are completely unfamiliar with it, it's important to introduce them to your specific telehealth platform and the technologies it uses.

For instance, you could explain that they'll have the option to receive appointment reminders by text, email or phone call, or you could show them how to use the platform's user interface.

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4. Decide Whether Self-Scheduled Appointments Will Need Approval

Due to the nature of some illnesses, many practices are wary of allowing patients to take full control of their appointment scheduling.

One potential solution is allowing patients to request time slots online but not book their appointments. Instead, staff can review patients' requests and approve or deny them as they see fit.

5. Offer Ongoing Support

Once your telehealth platform is up and running, it's important for staff and patients to receive technical support whenever they need it. Live representatives should respond in seconds to prevent IT problems from getting in the way of patient care.
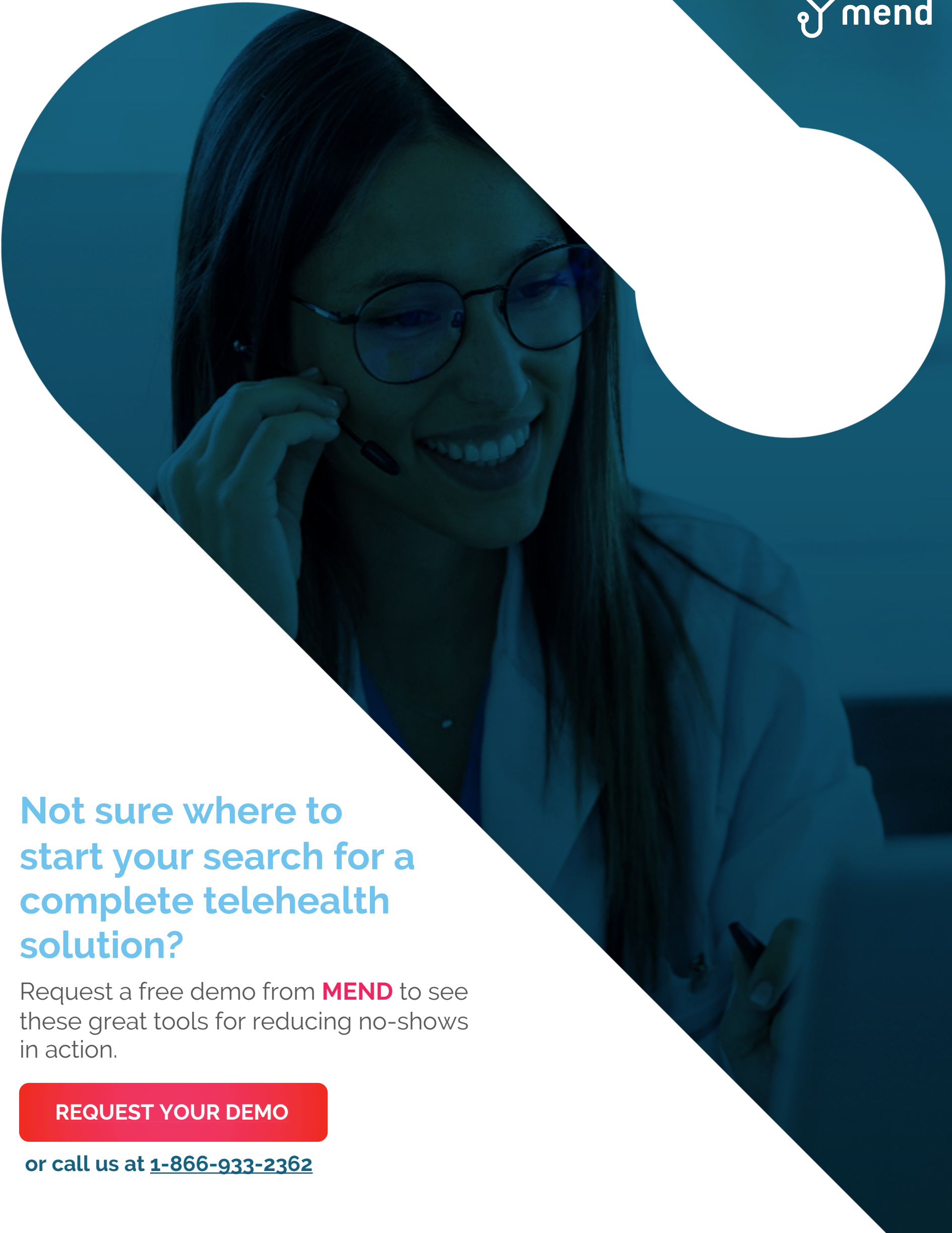
Conclusion

Telehealth Can Revolutionize Your Practice

Whether you've been unsure of which telehealth platform to use or intimidated by the technology that makes telehealth possible, it's clear that the right set of features can successfully take your practice into the 21st century.

This is true whether your team is big or small, whether your current technology is expansive or limited, and whether your patients are near or far.

No matter the case, it only takes **five key features to transform your practice and make no-shows a thing of the past**. With strong patient attendance, your focus can turn to strategies for maximizing revenue and growth.

Not sure where to start your search for a complete telehealth solution?

Request a free demo from **MEND** to see these great tools for reducing no-shows in action.

REQUEST YOUR DEMO

or call us at **1-866-933-2362**

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