We are recalling patients whose preventive visits we cancelled in the first 3 months of our agency's COVID response; to reduce call volume for MAs, we sent text messages to 40 people overdue for Pap smears. We are depending on our MAs to make calls to patients who missed well child checks, childhood immunizations, adult immunizations, birth control visits, Paps, etc. We feel we have a window of time this summer to catch up on as many of the missed preventive appointments as possible; in particular, childhood immunization rates are already low in our county and we don’t want to fall further behind. We also don’t want to see an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease in the fall, just as we are poised to respond to a second wave of COVID.

The stakes are high and at the same time, our MAs are the group of employees most impacted by a lack of childcare due to COVID restrictions, and/or by caring for elderly or otherwise vulnerable family members -- several of them have been out for days or weeks. The remaining MAs are working very hard to contact patients overdue for care, and we became concerned that this work, in addition to existing in-clinic support and phone screening visits, would burn out this vitally important group of employees.

Therefore, our quality improvement department staff combed through the list of patients due and overdue for Pap smears, to determine if some had already been scheduled for an in-person appointment. The staff found that a group of 40 women were the only ones who had not already been scheduled and decided that this number could receive text messages via WellApp, instead of adding them to the already long list of patients for the MAs to recall by phone.

A simple script was prepared, translated into Spanish and sent to the 40 patients over the course of a few days. The patients were directed by the text message to reach out to their Care Team, via the patient portal, or to our Call Center to make an appointment.

Our patients respond very well to text messages, and we’re hopeful that by using the WellApp and other simple technologies, we can keep our MA workload manageable at the same time as we bring our patients in for overdue preventive care.