VEText is a VA software that is integrated with VistA scheduling systems to send automated reminder messages for upcoming appointments to Veteran cell phones via SMS text messaging.  VEText facilitates patient-initiated cancellation of appointments by replying to the text message. The cancelation is automated within the VistA scheduling system and does not require staff intervention.  In addition, VEText finds open appointments and offers them to patients that exceed appointment wait times by SMS text message and if the veteran agrees to the earlier appointment by responding to the message the appointment is rescheduled within the VistA scheduling system and does not require staff intervention.  The goal is to provide a valuable service while at the same time reducing no-show and missed opportunity rates.

VEText has been installed and in use at all VA facilities except Columbus since 2018 and has added additional functionality in response to COVD-19; The ability for a veteran to request that their appointment be converted to a VA Video Connect (VVC) appointment, and Patient Tracking (“I Am Here”), a SMS text message solution to enable physical distancing at VHA medical centers.

The key functionality of VEText can be grouped into:

1. **Appointment Reminders.** This includes appointment cancellations by the veteran responding to the text message. If the veteran chooses to cancel by text message, VEText will cancel the appointment in the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) – VistA. VEText has the following features:

* ***System Features*** (When an appointment is cancelled)
  + Appointment is cancelled in the EMR
  + A note is placed in the appointment that the veteran cancelled.
  + Status is set to cancelled by patient.
  + The consult is unlinked from the appointment.
  + A comment is entered in the consult.
  + Consult is changed back to a status of Active.
  + Notifies configured staff by email the appointment was cancelled.
  + Cancels appointments that are dependent on the appointment (see appointment grouping below)
* ***Veteran Experience***
  + Downloadable Calendar File (e.g. .ics file format). – The appointment reminder includes an ICS file, so the veteran can save to their calendar.
  + Details option to see location and clinic name. A veteran can request more information by responding to the reminder with a code and get details of the appointment (See Privacy and Security Requirements)
  + Reply with zip code to opt into PHI details. Ability to request to receive PHI in their appointment reminder.
  + Easy appointment cancellation. A veteran can easily cancel their appointment by responding to a message.
  + Message specific cancellation. Unique codes attached to each reminder to identify which appointment the veteran wishes to cancel.
  + Phone number update using established local VAMC process. All demographic information used is pulled directly from the EMR to ensure the most up to date information.
  + Send from one unique short code. All appointment reminders are sent from a unique short code, so the veteran can identify who the message is coming from.
* ***Administrator Experience***
  + Reports:
    - Appointment Reminders
      * Appointment Reminders
      * Confirmed Appointments
      * Inbound Messages
      * Invalid Phone Numbers
      * Outbound Messages
      * Response Classifications
      * SMS Opt Out List
    - Cancelled Appointments
      * Cancelled Appointments
      * Community Care Cancellations
      * Pending Cancellations
      * Unprocessed Cancellations
    - Clinics
      * Enabled Clinics
      * Excluded Clinics
    - Community Care
      * CC Scheduled Appointments
      * CC Status Message Responses
      * CC Status Messages
    - Misc. Reports
      * Alert Recipients
      * Portal Users
    - National/VISN Reports
      * Cumulative Summary
      * OSM Clinics
      * OSM Summary
      * Patient Tracking/Screening Summary
      * Sites Summary
      * SMS Reminders Summary
    - Open Slot Management
      * Daily Summary
      * Open Appointment Slots
      * OSM Clinics
      * Patient Wait List
      * Reschedule Messages
      * Rescheduled Appointments
    - Patient Tracking
      * Patient Tracking Status
      * Pending Notifications/Check-Ins
    - Summary Reports
      * Clinics Summary
      * Cumulative Summary (All Dates)
      * Daily Summary
      * Daily Summary Chart
      * Monthly Summary (All Dates)
      * Monthly Summary Chart (All Dates)
      * Weekly Summary (All Dates)
      * Weekly Summary Chart (All Dates)
    - VVC Appointments
      * F2F to VVC Appointments
      * Unprocessed VVC Appointments
  + Customizable text messages per facility with insertable variables for information from the EMR. The customizable message can be unique by facility, site, clinic group (stop code) and clinic. The following information can be inserted by variable into the message.
    - Patient First Name
    - VA Facility Name
    - Appointment Date (4 different formats)
    - Clinic Name
    - Clinic Friendly Name
    - Facility/CBOC
    - Clinic Location (site)
    - Appointment Date/Time
    - Clinic/CBOC/Facility Phone number (Can be unique by facility, site, clinic group, and clinic).
    - Additional information can be included:
      * Turn ICS on or off.
      * URL
      * Customization of the response codes (Confirm, Cancel, Details)
  + Ability to select which appointments get reminders
    - Can be selected by Facility, Site, stop code (clinic grouping), clinic
    - Ability to apply specific template to a reminder.
    - Number of reminders to be sent and timing.
      * Up to three different messages for the same appointment.
    - Time of day the message is sent.
    - Link to both NIRMO 1.0 and NIRMO 2.0 (National Initiative to reduce missed opportunities). This is a VA written predictive algorithm that predicts the probability a veteran will “no-show” for their appointment. This linking allows the sending of an additional reminder to these patients.
  + Clinic Grouping. Clinics can be group together to allow easy cancellation by the veteran when one clinic is dependent on another (nurse clinic before physician clinic)
  + Ability to opt out or in a veteran.
  + Ability to choose to send reminders to unique veterans by long code.
  + Patient Messages Tool - allows for viewing all message sent to and received by a veteran.
  + Cancellations/Reschedules interface allows for viewing and processing cancelled and rescheduled appointments with ability to filter appointments by customizable clinic lists.
  + Patient Tracking interface allows for viewing patients who have checked in via the remote mobile check-in process (“I am Here”) and notify veterans via SMS when they can come into the building for their appointment.
  + Cancelled/Rescheduled Appointments/Patient Tracking email alerts. VEText emails staff to notify them that a veteran has cancelled or rescheduled their appointment, and alerts staff when a veteran has checked in via the mobile check-in process but has not yet been notified by clinic staff and the appointment time is in the past

1. **Open Slot Management (OSM).** A process that queries the EMR (VistA) for unused appointments and offers earlier appointments to patients by text message. The veteran can respond to the message accepting the earlier appointment and VEText will reschedule the patient in the EMR (VistA).

* ***System Features***
  + OSM uses the patient’s preferred date (PID) to calculate the wait time of potential OSM candidates. Wait time is the difference between the PID and Appointment date and time.
  + The pool of patients that OSM uses as potential candidates for rescheduling are those who have a wait time greater than 30 and less than 90 days.  Sites can configure this date range per clinic.
  + Candidate patients are those who have opted out of the Choice program (“COO”).
  + VEText allows sites to select the clinics for OSM.
  + Clinics can be set up as individual clinics, by stop code, or by credit stop code.
  + VEText allows sites to exclude specific clinic slots (carve out)
  + OSM allows for Clinic grouping. This creates a shared pool of clinics that will be used to identify open slots.
  + VEText identifies open slots as they become available when an appointment is cancelled through VEText, and via an algorithm that searches for opens slots in the OSM clinics from 24 hours to 2 weeks from the current date.
  + VEText will send out a reschedule message offering the veteran an earlier appointment during normal waking hours (between 8am and 8pm).  These are sent out within about 5 minutes of the slot opening for appointments that were cancelled via VEText, and within about an hour for appointments that were found using the search algorithm.
  + VEText will only contact patients for open slots that are at least 24 hours in the future.  We are considering implementing an automated feedback loop, such as email message and/or reports, whereby providers/staff can be notified of open slots that have been filled by OSM.
  + For those veterans who have opted in to receive PHI in their reminder messages, the open slot messages will include the name of the clinic and facility.  Non-PHI open slot messages will include the option for patients to request appointment details, as with the reminder messages (see examples below).
  + Like appointment reminder messages, veterans can respond to the OSM messages with a code to confirm that they wish to be rescheduled or to decline to be rescheduled (see examples below).
  + If a veteran declines to be rescheduled for a particular clinic, that veteran will not be contacted again for that particular clinic.
  + VEText allows veterans at least an hour to respond to the reschedule message, after which the reschedule offer will expire.
  + By default, up to five veterans will be texted simultaneously for the same open slot.  The first veteran to confirm will get the open appointment slot.  All other respondents will be notified that the appointment is no longer available.  This setting is configurable per clinic.
  + If a veteran is rescheduled and the original appointment had a consult, the consult is associated with the earlier appointment date/time.
* ***Veteran Experience***
  + Simple message that allow the veteran to confirm their existing appointment or accept the new appointment time.
  + Ability to request more information about the appointment (Clinic name)
  + Ability to opt out.
  + Message specific rescheduling. Unique codes attached to each OSM message to identify which appointment the veteran wishes to reschedule.
  + Phone number update using established local VAMC process. All demographic information used is pulled directly from the EMR to ensure the most up to date information.
  + Send from one unique short code. All appointment reminders are sent from a unique short code, so the veteran can identify who the message is coming from.
* ***Administrator Experience***
  + Web Portal that allows configuration per site
  + Ability to configure individual clinics or groups of clinics by stop code (Clinic grouping) or credit stop code.
  + Ability to specify date range for scheduled patients
  + Can configure excluded days/times for walk-ins or other reserved slots
  + Ability to configure the maximum number of simultaneous recipients for an open slot. This defines the number of veterans that will be offered the appointment at the same time.
  + Ability to exclude follow-up patients or new patients
  + Ability to prioritize new patients, time-sensitive appointments, “call me sooner” patients
  + Allow rescheduling patients before the PID
  + Allows for setting up ancillary clinics used with the primary OSM clinics (e.g. labs, pharmacy, nursing) and specify the parameters for rescheduling these associated ancillary appointments.
  + Cancellation of original appointment, rescheduling of new appointment, and re-linking of associated consult with new appointment.
  + Ability to exclude individual clinics, stop code, credit stops, and divisions (CBOCs) from OSM.
  + Ability to group clinics to allow for rescheduling appointments between grouped clinics.
  + Reports:
    - Open Slot Management
      * Daily Summary
      * Open Appointment Slots
      * OSM Clinics
      * Patient Wait List
      * Reschedule Messages
      * Rescheduled Appointments
    - National/VISN Reports
      * OSM Clinics
      * OSM Summary

1. **I am Here (IMH):**  I Am Here / Patient Tracking Tool is and additional tool that can be used during the check-in process to assist facilities with physical distancing for face to face appointments.  The Veteran sends a text when they arrive on campus and receives automated instructions regarding where to wait. Clinic staff use the VEText portal to keep track of the patients and send a text to the when it is time to come into the clinic for the appointment.

Surgery Remote Notifications. As part of I Am Here, there is a feature that enables surgery departments to track and notify family members of patients in surgery.

***System Features***

Basic Workflow:

* + Veterans arrives at facility for their appointment
  + Veterans text “here” to an SMS short code
  + Veteran is sent an auto-reply acknowledging they’ve been checked-in and instructing them to wait for further instruction
  + Using the VEText portal, clinic staff can notify the Veteran “the provider is ready to see them.”
* ***Veteran Experience***
  + Simple interface to notify their clinic remotely that they are onsite and ready for their appointment.
  + Ability to complete the COVID-19 screening tool while they wait to be notified their provider is ready to see them.
* ***Staff Experience*** 
  + Easy to use web portal used but clinicians and clinic staff to monitor what patients have arrived and notify them to proceed to the clinic.
  + Reports that show time patients waited at each step and patients still waiting to be seen.
  + Ability to check the patient into their appointment in the EMR (VistA).

1. **Other Major Features – *more than an appointment reminder application***
   * Board of Veterans’ Appeals (BVA) Hearing Reminders
   * Mass Text Messaging (i.e. COVID-19 messages, etc.)
   * AI Autoresponder (in pilot phase)
   * Patient Tracking Tool / I Am Here (IMH)
   * VEText API
   * Inactive Veterans (in pilot phase)
   * Care in the Community Use Cases (in development)
2. **VA System Integrations**
   * VistA
   * Caseflow
   * VA Profile
   * Master Person Index (MPI) / Master Veteran Index (MVI) – in progress
3. **VA Security and Compliance**
   * Active 3-year Full Authority to Operate (ATO)
     + VA OI&T Supported
     + 24/7 Support
   * Protected Health Information (PHI) Workflow
     + Reviewed and Approved by VA Office General Counsel (OGC)
4. **VEText Program Roadmap**
   * Expansion of Communication Channels
     + Email
     + Voice
     + Mail / Postcard
     + Contact Center Integration
   * Use Cases
     + OR Surgery Notifications
     + Pharmacy Notifications
       - Pick-Up Notifications
       - Tracking # for Mail Order Rx
       - Refill Reminders
     + VA Video Connect (VVC) Appointment Reminders
     + Flu Shots
     + NEAR List
     + Consults
     + Clinic Cancellations
     + Emergency Management Notification System
       - Adverse Weather
       - Emergencies (i.e. active shooter, fire, etc.)

