

## “Is your data playing dirty?”

### What is dirty data?

Dirty data is outdated information.

### Dirty patient demographic data

This is generally made up of disconnected phone numbers, outdated addresses for patients and outdated next-of-kin contact details. It could also include family name changes, separate postal addresses and employer details.

### Why improve dirty data?

Outdated patient information will affect the practice's day-to-day running. This includes aspects such as:

- Emergency contacts
- Hospital referrals
- Third party referrals – x-rays, physio, etc.
- Text campaigns
- Phone campaigns

### How can I improve dirty patient demographic data?

Dirty patient demographic data prevents regular contact with your patients. Below are a few ideas that have been shared amongst practices to help cleanse your practice management system.

- Receptionists are responsible for the up-keep of patient records so successive campaigns would ensure cleanliness of patient data.
- Start now...let all your practice staff know in your weekly huddle that you are having a month's campaign to update patient details – it becomes everyone's job.
- Put signs in your waiting room and on reception desk reminding patients to update their details with the receptionist before being seated.
- On arrival of the patient and at the time that they report in, take a few extra minutes to ask:
  - Are you still at the same address?
  - Are your phone details still the same?
  - Do you have a current email address?
  - Have your next-of-kin details changed?
- If you miss this opportunity, choose a symbol/wording, put it on the appointment book beside the patient's name so that all staff will recognise the need for the patient to be asked.
- Use the NHI lookup for updated addresses.
- Next-of-kin and family tree connections are an option.
- The use of recent inbox documents scanned into patients' files is another place to check.
- Scroll through recent daily records. Many patients tell their GP that they are either moving or leaving the country, however they don't think to tell the receptionist or nurse.
- Use of local knowledge within your practice staff.
- Staff member following up rejected texts should remove the phone number and use steps above to search for new number.