



## Singapore Healthcare Management 2015

# Improve patient access to appointment information and effectively manage non-appointment related calls



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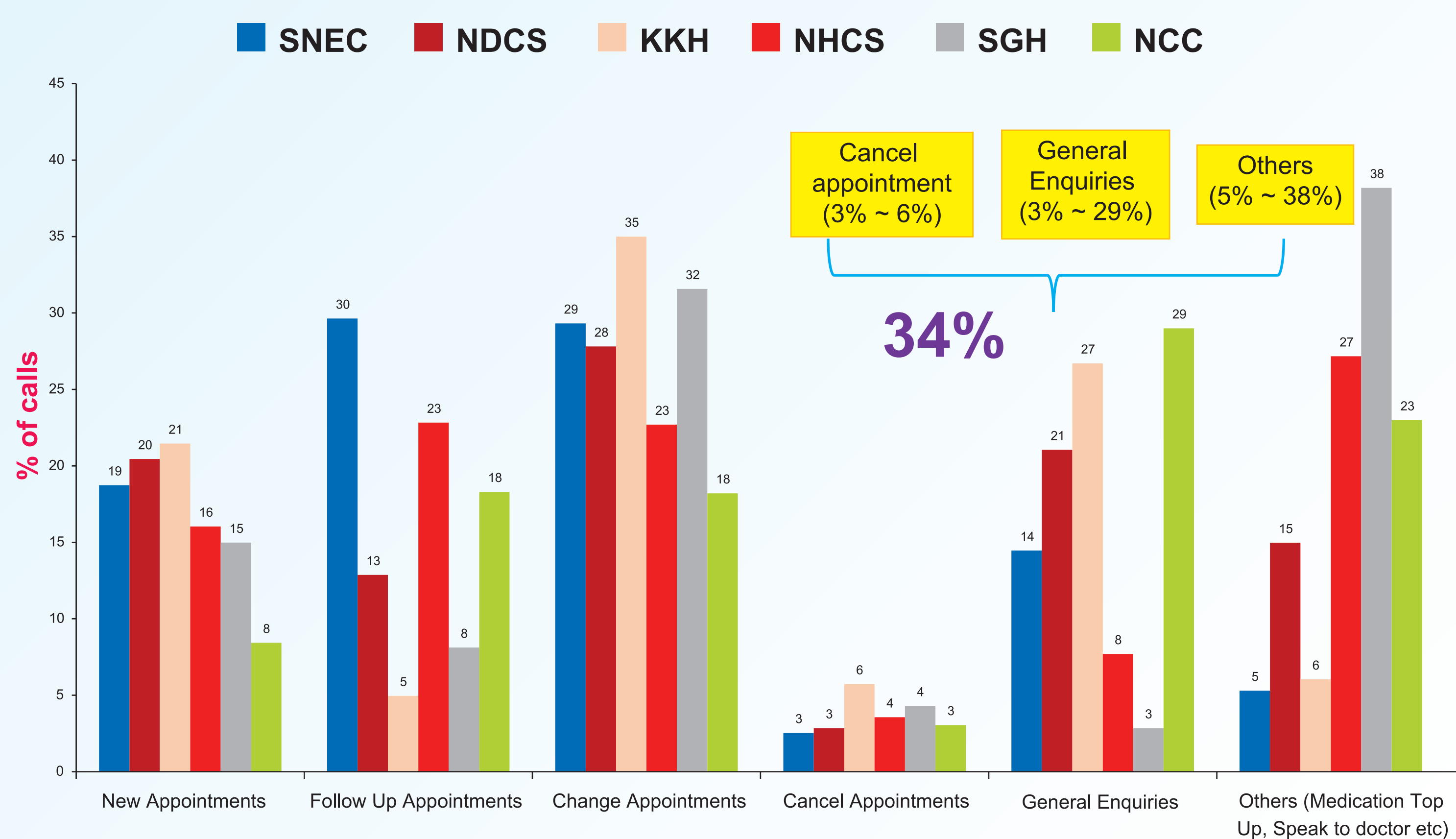
## Objectives & Goal

The Appointment Access Task Force (AATF) was formed in September 2013 to improve access for all stakeholders in obtaining, reviewing and changing appointments in SingHealth Institutions with the aim of creating a seamless experience for patients and a staff-friendly system. To support this, Integrated Appointment & Call Centre Workgroup was formed to develop an integrated appointment system and processes to better manage the incoming call volume to Call Centre with the aim to:

- Reduce the number of inbound non-appointment related calls routed to Appointment Officers.
- Improve patient access to appointment information without having to speak to an Appointment Officer.
- Reduce abandoned call rates and call waiting time to speak to an Appointment Officer.

## Methodology

The workgroup comprising of various institution representative conducted a week's survey to collect data on the number and types of inbound calls received on the Appointment hotline. The overall performance of the call centres was also reviewed. This included the total calls received, abandoned call rates and call waiting time for callers to speak to an Appointment Officer.



The data collected was analysed. 60% of call volume received were not appointments making related. 34% of the calls were meant for other departments, such as billing enquiries, request for medical records, change of surgery appointments and cancellation of appointments. Through the use of technology, we can better manage these type of calls. The Interactive Voice Response [IVR] system was introduced to achieve our objectives.

### • IMPROVING ACCESS

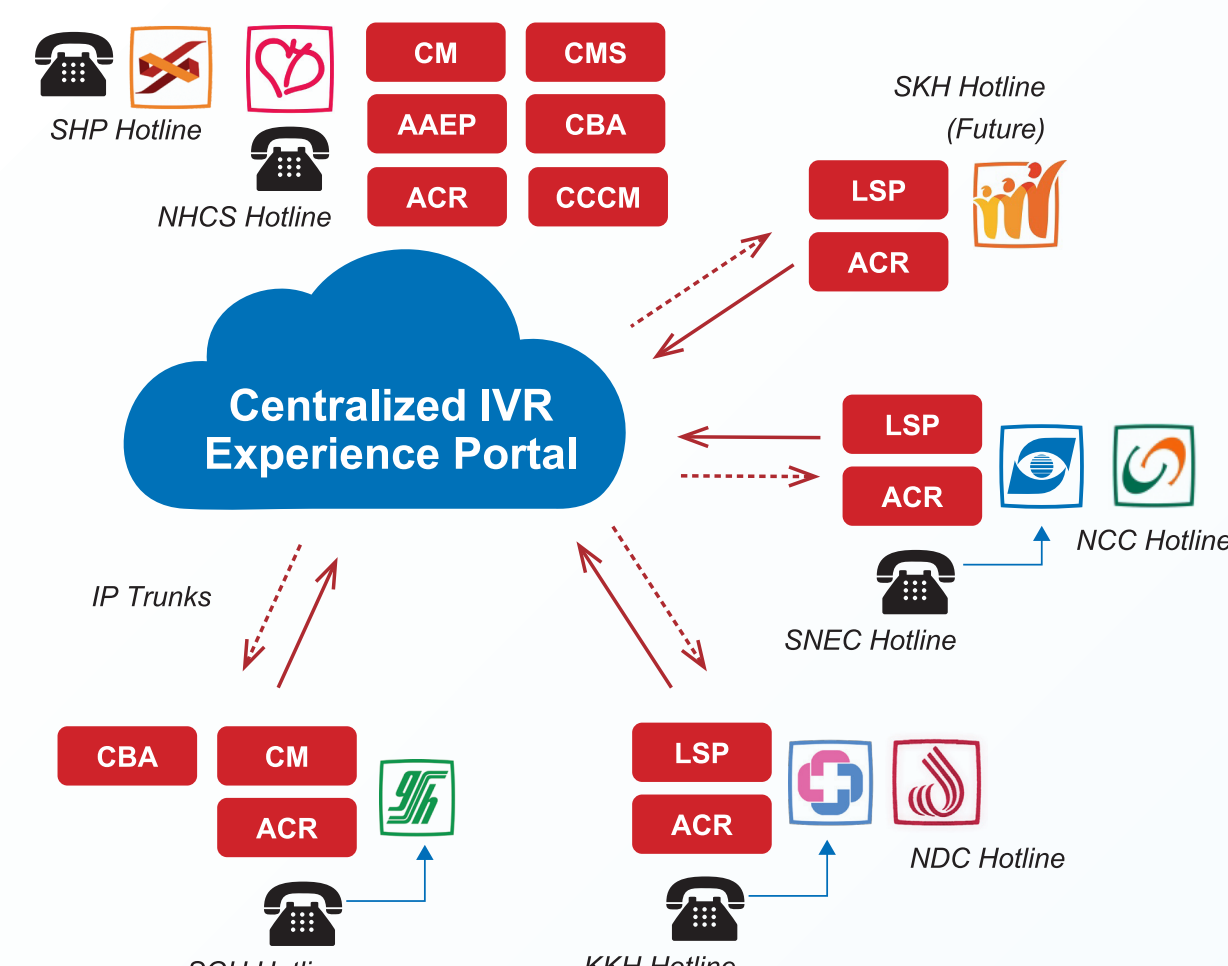
- 24/7 Self help features to allow patient to check or cancel their appointment booking without having to speak to an Appointment Officer.
- 24/7 Self help information on Clinic locations and operating hours.

### • MANAGING NON-APPOINTMENT RELATED CALLS

- Automated transfer to other departments for non-appointment related services eg. requests for medical report, top up medications, billing and surgery appointment queries.

To save cost, institutions with older phone systems that were not compatible to connect to the new centralised IVR system were incorporated into NHCS's phone system. This significantly reduced the cost of implementing this project.

Onboard options	Apply to	Features and Benefits	Incremental Investment
- Established the IP trunks between the Institution's System to Centralized IACC System	Institutions with Avaya Platform	- Centralized Self-Service App and reports; - Have the flexibility to have the hotlines terminate at Institution's System or IACC System;	- Configuration on the Institution's System to establish the IP trunk to the IACC system;
- Established the IP trunks between the Institution's System to Centralized IACC System. It is subject to the compatibility of the IP trunks.	Institutions with 3 <sup>rd</sup> party PABX	- Centralized Self-Service App and reports; - Have the flexibility to have the hotlines terminate at Institution's System or IACC System;	- Increase the IP trunk licenses and capability in the Institution's System - Configuration on the Institution's System to establish the IP trunk to the IACC system;
- Migrate the PABX system to same Phone System Platform, and established the IP trunks between the new system to Centralized IACC System	Institutions with 3 <sup>rd</sup> party PABX	- Centralized Self-Service App and reports; - Have the flexibility to have the hotlines terminate at Institution's System or IACC System;	- Migration of existing PABX to same Phone System Platform with necessary configuration of IP trunks.
- Migrate the Hotlines to terminate to the Centralized IACC System - The call will to the off-net transfer to Institutions PABX for Agent/Operator Assist.	Institutions with 3 <sup>rd</sup> party PABX	- Centralized Self-Service App and reports.	- Additional ISDN Trunk Card for the required hotline capacity in IACC system.

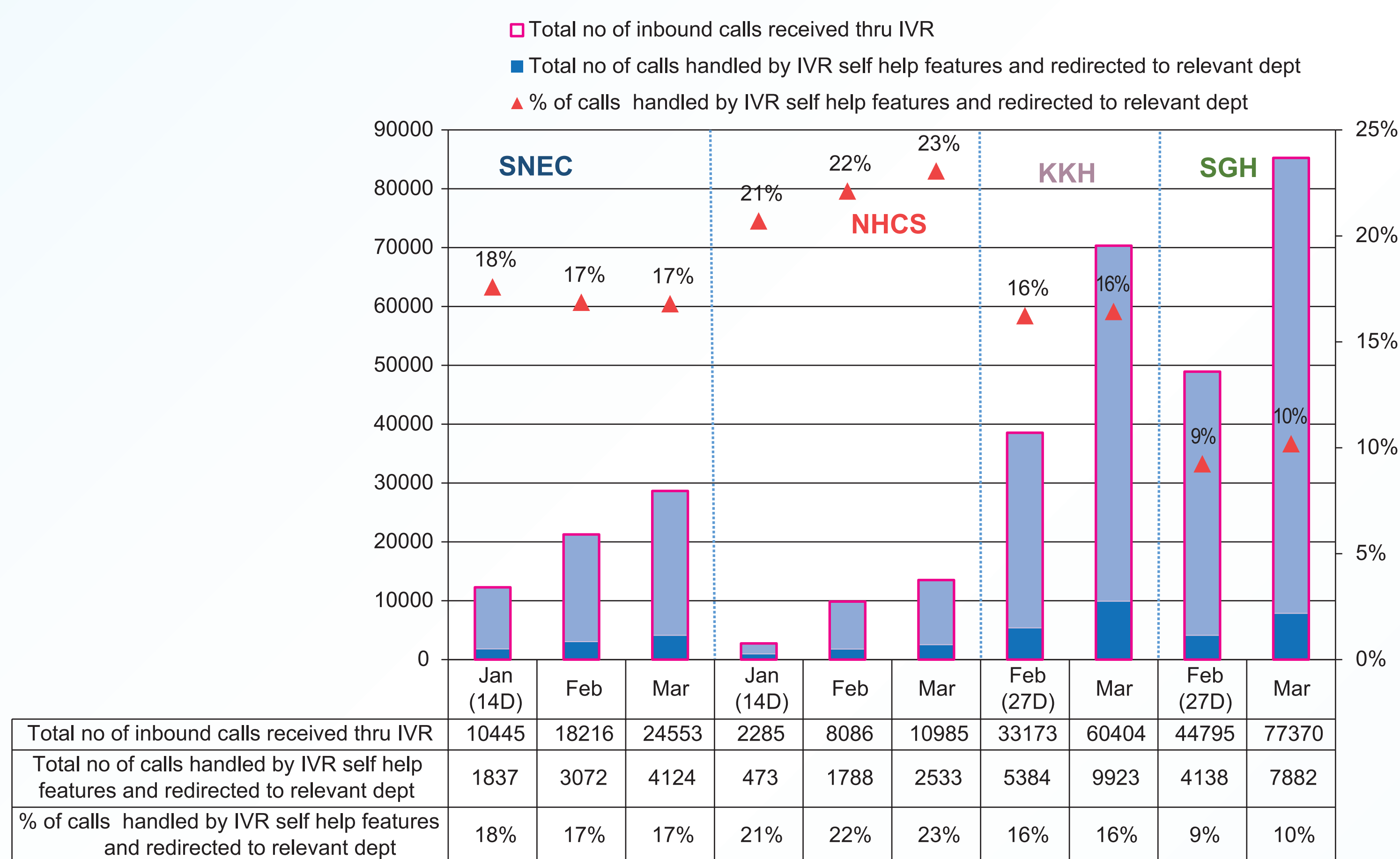


## Results

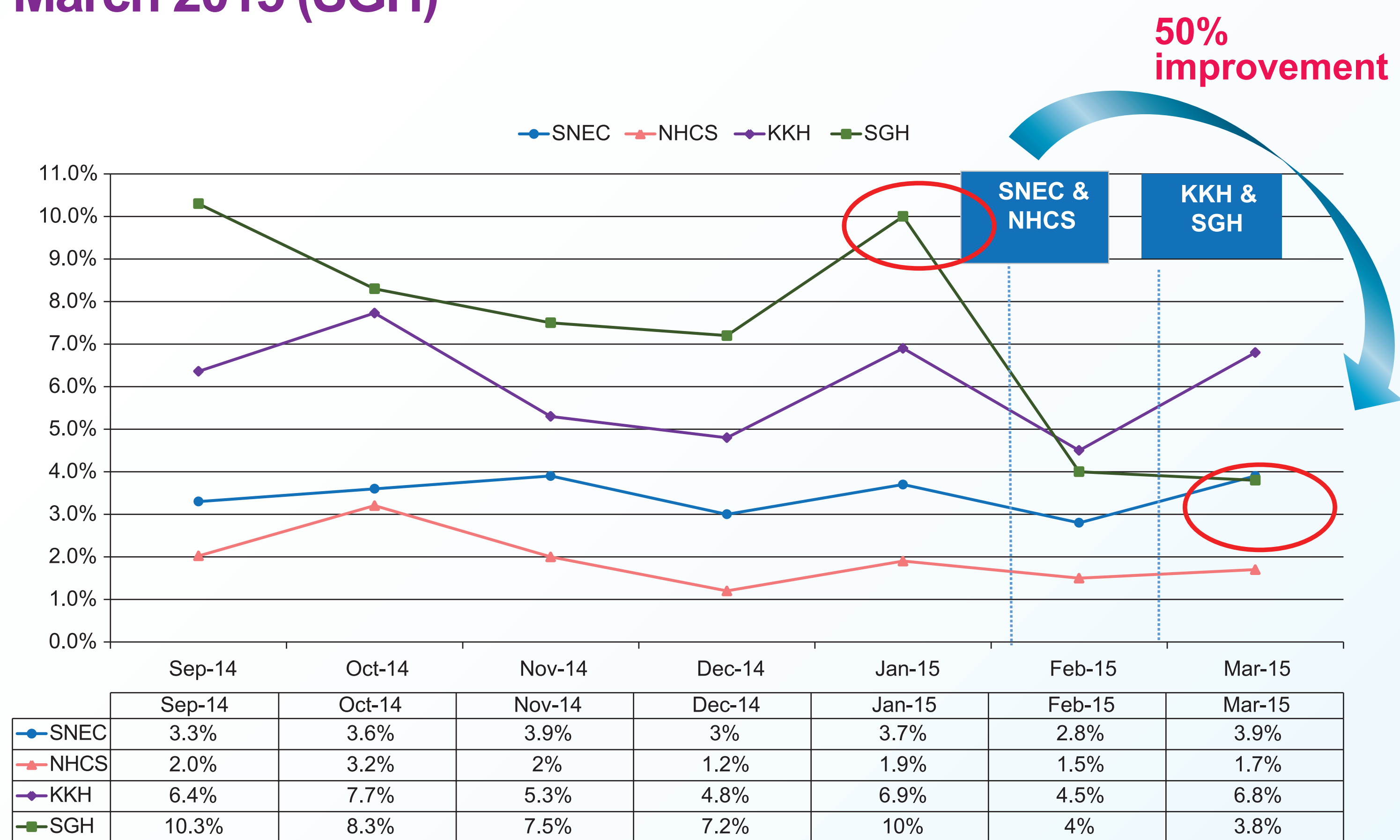
### Over 41,000 Calls Reduced with Cumulative Savings of 2,060 Man-Hours

The Interactive Voice Response System was successfully implemented for SNEC on 17 January 2015 and thereafter progressively implemented for all other institutions.

As at March 2015, the project achieved a cumulative 14% (41,154) reduction of calls to Appointment Officer through IVR Self Help Features for 4 institutions. This is equivalent to 2,060 man-hours savings.



### Abandon call rate significantly reduced from 10% to 5% in March 2015 (SGH)



Note: KKH – shortfall of 3 manpower affected the overall abandoned call rate performance  
NHCS & SNEC abandoned call rate is at its optimal

## Conclusion

This project is one of the many appointment access improvement initiatives under the Appointment Access Taskforce (AATF) / Integrated Appointment & Call Centre Workgroup (IACC) SingHealth.

The successful implementation of the Interactive voice response system with self-help features made it possible for our patients to obtain information and better manage their appointments without having to speak to our Appointment Officers. Calls are therefore better managed and reduction of non- appointment related calls routed to Appointment Officers who now has more time for other duties and assisting patients requiring more help with their appointments. This project resulted in higher productivity and manpower cost savings of \$41,154 accumulated within 8 weeks after implementation.