

Why clinics miss patient calls, and what each missed call really costs

By The Anservo Team | Last updated July 2026 | anservo.ai/blog/missed-patient-calls

Key takeaways

- Up to 42% of calls to medical practices go unanswered; roughly 20 to 23% is a realistic everyday average, and small practices miss the most.
- 62% of callers who reach voicemail hang up, and 67% call a competing provider instead of waiting.
- Using MGMA's ~\$150 average visit value, missed patient calls can put six figures of annual revenue at risk.
- An AI receptionist for clinics answers every call 24/7, handles simultaneous calls, and books appointments automatically.

How many patient calls actually go unanswered?

An analysis of roughly 7,000 calls across 22 medical practices in 18 states found that 42% of incoming calls went unanswered [1]. Other operational benchmarks put the typical figure around 20 to 23% of calls abandoned or missed on average, with solo and small practices missing 30% or more [3]. We treat 42% as a high-water mark and roughly 1 in 4 as a realistic everyday average.

What patients do when no one answers

Patient-behavior surveys report that 62% of callers who land in voicemail hang up without leaving a message, and 67% will call a competing provider rather than wait for a callback [2].

What one missed patient call is worth

MGMA benchmarks put average revenue per outpatient encounter at about \$150 for primary care and \$233 for a specialty visit [4]. MEPS puts the average primary-care office visit near \$218 [5]. With patients averaging roughly 3.1 physician visits per year, a single new patient relationship is worth thousands [6].

Cost model formula

`calls/day x missed% x booking-intent% x would-have-booked% x visit value x business days`

Worked example with conservative defaults: `60 x 0.25 x 0.50 x 0.60 x $150 x 250 = $168,750/yr.`

AI receptionist vs answering service vs hiring more staff

Capability	AI receptionist (Anservo)	Answering service	More staff
Answers every call, 24/7	Yes	Yes	No, shift-limited
Handles many calls at once	Yes	Limited	No
Books directly into your calendar	Yes	Usually a message	Yes
Multilingual (51+ languages)	Yes	Limited	Rarely
Cost to scale	Flat, predictable	Per-call/per-minute	High (salaries)

Sources

1. OhMD, "How to Reduce Patient Call Volume" (multi-practice call analysis, 42% unanswered). ohmd.com/reduce-patient-call-volume
2. Patient10x content hub (62% abandon voicemail; 67% call a competitor). patient10x.com
3. AnswerNet, "Costs of Missed Calls in Medical Offices" (~20 to 23% average abandonment). answernet.com
4. MGMA benchmarks via MD Clarity (~\$150 primary care, ~\$233 specialty per encounter). mdclarity.com
5. U.S. Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS), AHRQ (~\$218 average primary-care visit, 2022). meps.ahrq.gov
6. Tebra, "How to calculate patient lifetime value" (~3.1 visits per person per year). tebra.com

Anservo is an AI voice receptionist for clinics: answers every call 24/7, books appointments, and hands urgent calls to your team. Book a demo at anservo.ai/demo.html. Read the full interactive article with the live calculator at anservo.ai/blog/missed-patient-calls.