
Clinical scribes in the Emergency Department

Initiative Type

Model of Care

Status

Plan

Added

01 November 2022

Last updated

07 November 2024

URL

<https://clinicaexcellence.qld.gov.au/improvement-exchange/clinical-scribes-emergency-department>

Summary

Medical students have been trialled as scribes at the Emergency Department (ED) of Redland Hospital (Metro North Hospital and Health Service) to support Emergency Physicians (EP) in Acute, Fast Track/Paediatrics and Short Stay Units to undertake the following tasks:

- carry DECT phone / Vocera to filter calls and conduct calls to other clinicians
- type clinical notes into the electronic medical record as dictated by the EP

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- obtain imaging and laboratory results via IT ready for EP to review
 - chaperone for intimate examinations
 - perform limited procedures (e.g. venipuncture, IV cannulation) under supervision of EP.

Key dates

Nov 2022

Nov 2022

Implementation sites

Redland Hospital and Metro North HHS

Partnerships

Healthcare Improvement Unit and Metro North HHS

Key Contacts

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Aim

To improve productivity and efficiencies within the Emergency Department by introducing medical student scribes.

Benefits

Early trials have shown that this role released the Emergency Physician's time to be more focused with patients, and saved time in typing clinical notes. Both the productivity and primary consultations increased. Benefits to the medical student included exposure to a wide range of presentations, improved intern-readiness and bedside manner exposure.

Background

There is a demand across the world for Emergency department doctors to see more patients and also in a timely fashion. Scribes provide real-time charting in Emergency Department (ED) settings. A student trained as a scribe enters electronic documentation (notes) into the computer, including patient history, physician examination findings, test results, and other information. By using students as scribes, doctors may feel less stressed and tired despite their heavy workload, and patients don't mind if scribes are helping the doctor. Redland Hospital is an outer metropolitan mixed ED seeing approximately 57,000 patients per annum.

Solutions Implemented

A six-week trial (nine shifts in total) was introduced, using two final year Medical Students as a clinical scribe to assist a senior Emergency Physician within a metro Emergency Department.

Evaluation and Results

Data will be collected and surveys conducted from scribed and non-scribed shifts over the six-week period. It will include data on patients seen by doctor as well as median length of stay in the emergency department.

Further Reading

- [Scribes boost ED doctors' productivity and reduce patient waiting time](#)
- [Impact of scribes on emergency medicine doctors' productivity and patient throughput: multicentre randomised trial](#)

PDF saved 05/02/2025