Assessment on the quality of Ophthalmology clinic letters, a comparison of Electronic Health Records

Tu Ly
Yu Jeat Chong
Birmingham Midland Eye Centre (BMEC), Birmingham, United Kingdom

Introduction

The NHS Constitution issued guidance in 2023 indicating that patients "have the right to be given information about the test and treatment options available". Therefore, it has become common practice for clinic letters to be sent to patients and their general practitioners (GP).

The aim of this audit was to compare the quality of letters produced by two different Electronic Health Records (EHR):

- Winscribe (dictated letters)
- Medisoft (a clinical documentation software used only in Ophthalmology).

50 patients were randomly chosen between January and October 2023, 25 from the uveitis clinics and 25 from the medical retina clinics. Using the clinic letters guidelines outlined by the NHS Plan and the Professional Record Standards Body, letters were graded in the following domains:

- Time between clinic date and typing of letter
- Total number of medical abbreviations
- Layout
- Quality of English and prose
- Drug names, doses, and frequency
- Letters filed in notes

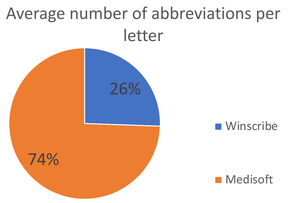
Aims

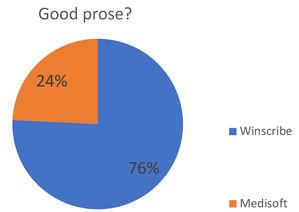
- To compare the quality of letters produced by two different EHR at the BMEC:
  - Winscribe (dictated letters) – for uveitis clinics
  - Medisoft (a clinical documentation software used only in Ophthalmology) – for medical retina clinics
- 50 patients were randomly chosen between January and October 2023, 25 from the uveitis clinics and 25 from the medical retina clinics.
- Using the clinic letters guidelines outlined by the NHS Plan and the Professional Record Standards Body, letters were graded in the following domains:
  - Time between clinic date and typing of letter (*recommendation by trust of 5 days)*
  - Grade of clinician typing the letter
  - Total number of medical abbreviations *(to assess the clarity of the letter for the GP and for patients to understand)*
  - Layout *(including the use of headings)*
  - Quality of English and prose
  - Drug names, doses, and frequency *(important for GPs to prescribe this in the community)*
  - Letters filed in notes *(to be viewed by other specialties)*

Results

- Overall, results show that dictated letters were superior to letters created by Medisoft.
- The most notable findings include, the fact that there were far fewer abbreviations (average of 1.25) used in the dictated letters compared to an average of 3.64 in Medisoft letters.
- 100% of dictated letters had a clear layout and 100% had good prose.
- Only 60% and 32% of Medisoft letters had good layout and good prose, respectively.
- Furthermore, 80% of patients' medications were clearly listed in dictated letters compared to 0% in Medisoft letters.
- Omitting information, such as medications and their doses, may be unhelpful for GP in continuing patients' care in the community.

	Dictated letters	Medisoft
Total letters	25 (all uveitis clinics)	25 (all medical retina clinics)
Mean time for letter to be typed	0.96 days	0 days
Total no of abbreviations	43	91
Average no of abbreviations per letter	1.25	3.64
Clear layout?	100%	60%
Good prose?	100%	32%
Drugs listed in full?	80%	0%
Letters filed in notes on unity	92%	72%





Discussion

- Dictated letters, using Winscribe, are better but may be more time consuming when compared to Medisoft letters.
- In addition to this, dictated letters on Unity can be viewed by other specialties in the hospital. Whereas they do not have access to Medisoft. This is done by clinicians directly copying and pasting their dictated letters onto Unity.
- A questionnaire was distributed to 11 clinicians (ranging from junior ophthalmology trainees to consultants) at the BMEC, to ascertain which EHR is preferred and how confident they were with using each EHR. Interestingly, it showed that 54.5% of respondents preferred using Medisoft over dictating their letters.
- However, 82% of the respondents do not work in the uveitis clinics at the BMEC as they may only do on-calls at the BMEC. So they are not accustomed to using Winscribe and are more familiar with using Medisoft. Therefore, 57% of the respondents would like to receive guidance regarding engagement to improve usability for each EHR.
- Hence, a document was created, which provides guidance for each EHR. This can be distributed amongst clinicians to improve usability. A re-audit will be performed to analyse the quality of the clinic letters.
- There are also other options which can be explored, including the use of Unity in writing letters, rather than to copy and paste dictated letters onto Unity.

In summary … There are many different options for generating clinical letters in ophthalmology, including Winscribe, Medisoft, Medisight and OpenEyes, just to name a few. Continuous end user engagement is important to ensure the quality of letters and the clinical needs are met. Overall, the final product should suit users, rather than making users suit the product.