

Physician Perception of Scribe Impact on Metrics and Quality of Life

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Study objectives

Emergency departments have been adopting scribe programs as an action plan for improving physician productivity. The click-intensive nature of Electronic Medical Record (EMR) combined with increasing requirements of what needs to be documented have impeded operational efficiencies and escalated awareness of the genuine high cost of unassisted EMR. To date, data regarding scribe utilization in the emergency department has been scant. This is the only study to look into how a scribe's professionalism and competency. In this study, we describe physicians' experiences with scribe utilization, impact on productivity, wellness, and job satisfaction, as well as their opinions of scribes' technical skills and professionalism.

Methods

We utilized survey methodology. The sample pool comes from 644 Emergency Medicine eligible healthcare providers utilizing a single scribe company, which at the time of study serviced 72 hospitals in 23 states with over 800 employees.

The questionnaire was composed of five sections using a Likert scale: demographics (10 questions), scribe professionalism (4 questions), provider productivity (9 questions), provider experience (7 questions), and an assessment of scribes' technical skills (5 questions). The survey was distributed via SurveyMonkey.com between May 5- Aug 1, 2011. Descriptive statistics, such as means and percentages are provided. All respondents were anonymous.

Results

There were 231/644 respondents from 61 hospitals, 74% were male with a mean age of 42.5 years. EMR documentation was used by 56.8% of respondents. Some (85%) said that working with a

scribe may extend their career; others (48.4%) said they might or did not know yet. The majority (86.4%) rated scribe timeliness as very good to excellent. With respect to productivity (agree or strongly agree), 64.2% felt that they had higher relative value units and 79.4% were able to treat more patients per hour with scribe utilization. The majority of respondents (74.8%) felt that scribes were very or extremely beneficial when transitioning to use of an EMR. Respondents who were previously using an EMR without scribes indicated that there was a large positive impact of scribe utilization on EMR experience with respect to relieving the stress of documentation (87.4%), being able to “focus on being a physician” (78.8%), quality of life (77.9%) and patient care (77.3%).

Conclusion

Overall, ED physicians that utilize scribes have positive perceptions of their experiences, and many believe that working with scribes may potentially extend their career. In addition, scribes were beneficial when using an EMR system, and thought to improve physician productivity, physician job satisfaction, while assessing scribe technical competency and professional demeanor.