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Research paper

Managing Medical Records in Specialist Medical Centres

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Abstract

A collection of facts about a patient's life and health history of past and present illnesses and treatments is known as medical records. The health professionals were contributing to record the patient's care. The responsibility in managing daily records that produced by each of department is by the Medical Records Department. It is a department under clinical support services with activities including managing of patient records, patient information production, management of medical reports, and hospital statistics. This article aims to discuss the challenge associated with managing medical records in the organization and how to handle and manage it with the records management as a tool to mitigate risk. Therefore, it is likely to prompt further research by addressing existing gaps towards improving service delivery that can contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of records management and archives generally.

Keywords: *Medical Records, Records Management, Specialist Centre, Records Management Department, Medical Records Officer*

1. Introduction

Organizations with good records management practices benefit in many ways. Records management provide evidence of activities or business transactions which means it is to recall the details of what was done or what was decided in the daily operation in the organizations. The records management also makes informed decisions and formulates policy on a solid basis of knowledge. Medical records considered as one of the field that consider its records as critical resources in carrying specific functions. The medical records may have been in the paper and in an electronic based that also known as health records. It contains collection patient information including health, treatments and others. The government and private hospital used medical records for continuing care of the patient health. Furthermore, it is also used in the health care facilities and services such as management and planning, research of medical, and in producing statistics of healthcare. In every organization, knowledge and experience worker is an important asset especially in Specialist Medical Centre.

Davenport [1] stated that a knowledge workers is the employee that "have high degrees of expertise, education, or experience, and the primary purpose of their jobs involves the creation, distribution or application of knowledge".

Specialist Medical Centre whose staffs with excellent knowledge and experience are their utmost priority in order to finish the entirely given task. However, Specialist Medical Centre also confronts several difficulties involving in managing medical records in Medical Records Department.

2. Problem Statement

Without apply a good records management in the organizations they are lack to manage efficiently and effectively of the daily operations as well as to use the knowledge for past and future use [2]. In managing medical records, all activities done meets the standards been addressed in ensuring that the practice meet a predetermined value.

According to Hersh [3] there are several problem related to electronic medical records which are increase time, insufficiency standards, and reveals privacy threats. Hence, it will bring difficulties in retrieving medical record. As stated by Noraziani et al., [4] no standardization on documentation systems which there lots of system software can be obtainable, therefore it create difference to the systems then cause document that is not standard. Although improvement has been done within creating coding standard for data elements, not any appeared in the same way as complete standard. Inadequate funding is also an issue, which lack of fund often promotes dishonesty [5]. Usually, the management of a medical centre may be restricted with inadequate fund and may not even have health information department [6]. Some hospital in recent years have shown the tendency towards self-satisfaction in hiring unqualified hands which the staffs assigned job are from different disciplines other than records management in term of managing the organization records [7].

3. Purpose of the Study

This conceptual paper is intended to discuss the problems of inadequate proper system for managing medical records in Specialist Medical Centre, to know the factors that cause the problem in managing medical records such as inadequate funding, and to suggest some strategies to overcome the problems of unaware staff in managing this medical record.

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4. Literature Review

Shepherd [8] has stated in her studies, records that are properly well managed and known as records management program can support business with efficiently, consistently deliver services, support decision making as well as make clear policy creation besides make sure continuous in implementation of policy and others. Nandalal [9] stressed that it is vital for medical records as it roles to deliver the information of the patient's health. Furthermore, it gives useful information such as disease epidemiology that is important to the country's health system and in the way of nation's health. The government and private hospital need to keep their medical records properly to deliver proof which can help within keeping the legal significance related to the patient, physician and healthcare institution.

Problems in managing medical records of inadequate system

As stated by the Government of Alberta [10] information is vital as one of strategic asset towards the government or private and valuable to people and technology. Similar to other organization, it is important to manage information and records. Some organization is generates records and information and there records need to be keep for future use. The organization keeps records to meet legal requirements in support of business operation as well as protect the right by took the administrative, historical and archival reasons [11]. Unfortunately, some issues have existed in managing medical records department that are lack of adequate and appropriate space, lack of sufficient budget, and lack of staff. In addition, they also have no effective way to managing their records that created by organization. Burns et al., [12] indicated that there is virtually no money in the budget of many organizations to train records staff that leads to lack of staff and inappropriate training towards managing records.

Health Port [13] stated that there are many practices that are easy such as by providing suitable record storage. In fact, the medical practitioners stated that patient's charts are not being discovered in 30% of visits because the results are not accessible [14].

Medical records are supposed to return in the Medical Records Division after being use [15]. In most of the Health Care organization, the problems of managing the medical records which make difficult because the records creator were not aware in managing records effectively when creating the records. The situation of poor records keeping practices such as fail to hire competent and qualified staff in records management field, inadequate storage accommodations, consequently staff lose discouragement and enthusiasm, and fail in the implementation of good records management.

There are staff including administration, clinical, nurses and health professionals must aware with the Medical Records Department as this department responsible to provide good records of patient information. There are significant numbers of patient are harmed from their health care that results in permanent injury, increase length of stay (LOS) in hospital and death.

From the lesson from the previous, the bad incident happen not because bad people purposely hurt patient but the healthcare system nowadays is complicated. Therefore, the successful treatment and results for each patient depends competence of healthcare providers. It will make it difficult to make sure the safe care of the system of care is designed to enable timely and comprehensive information and thoughtful by all the healthcare professionals including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and others.

Medical records is important source of evidence in the hospital and it supposed to be keep and preserve the records for evidence of business transactions. The hospital where the records are not manage properly, it can cause to be inadequate when it is needed by the users, records easily lost and even records was destroyed prematurely and maintained inappropriately. Besides that, too much records retention will lead problems during accessing records. However, there are more serious consequences if the records are not maintain properly.

Factors that cause problems - Inadequate funding, cost etc.

Records are vital information in any organization that needs a secure and good custody from the authorized person. It should be keep properly so that it cannot be reaching by intruders and can only use by authorized person for specific purpose. In order to maintain a good recordkeeping, an organization should prepare an adequate financial to support cost needed to spend for buying any equipment for recordkeeping maintenance. To have a good recordkeeping and maintenance, organization should have a good staff to manage all the records. Organization should hire person with qualification in records management field as they understand more about the procedure of managing the records which can improve records management of organization. To ensuring the useful and well-organized of managing of medical records, the hospital must have records personnel who have essential abilities in managing records that have been created in the course of their business [16].

Smolji and Dun [17] had said that managing patients' health records is an accurately as well as timely is vital element in the process of decision making. For example, the inadequate of patient health information will cause to medical errors and imprecise of decision making. By providing access of details of medical history of the patient is hard to the physicians. In addition, to reach the adequate and valuable information is challenging. The concept to support that balance of the efficient medical records is by the Personal Health Record and Continuity of Care Record.

Besides that, medical records are collection of patient's information health. When a patient has a record such as records in paper based, the patient by this time have a basic personal health record. The patient perhaps faced the problems of paper records [18]. In preparing medical records, the practitioners must keep in mind that he is generating the documents that are reflecting his personal findings and management of patient's diseases. In some time, these medical records can be needed by the patient and the courts in matters of laws and litigation [19].

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Medical Director of the healthcare was responsible to keep the privacy and confidentiality of medical records. Moreover, medical records need be kept in secure rooms to ensure it is well protected even it is not in use. The medical record should be protected from any harmful threats such as vermin, weather, and others. It is also need to be easy access when it is needed and returned in a complete form by the users after they use it.

Even though the electronic medical records have positive effects towards healthcare and medical practices, the implementation process become crucial issues. The implementation of EMR requires cooperation from hospital management. A good knowledge on EMR such as system features and system workflow is the important element to ensure an effective implementation. Mohamed Khalifa [20] stated that lack of knowledge is one of the factors on the unsuccessful implementation of EMR.

The hospital management must find proper solutions to improve and enhance the process of implementing EMR. Besides that, the management should hire technical expertise in order to implement effective EMR. Difficulties to accept electronic medical record (EMR) comprise inadequate of technical skills and illiterate of computer knowledge [21-22]. In comparing with other industries, the information technology in healthcare is still slow. It showed that there are limited available in organize applications, which resulted steep learning curve for healthcare organization.

Moreover, training on EMR is needed to avoid difficulty in retrieving medical records. Hospital management supposed to deliver continuous training for all staff on effective usage of EMR. The hospital management does not provide training for staff on using EMR. Thus, it will cause the problems on accessing medical records. In addition, in create modules on training such as to use the applications because of illiterate of computer knowledge, the

costs maintaining servers and software updates must be considered [23]. Lakbala, Lakbala and Inaloo [24] stated staff might hesitant to use EMR for a few reasons. Good plans for extensive training to use EMR are essential to prevent the lack of training.

After that, hospital management should give support in implementing EMR. As mentioned by Vu [25] the acceptance among staff towards EMR is decreased. For that reason, an immediate action must be set up to get supports. The hospital management needs to give encouragement to use EMR and must be extensive support from the whole organization. The encouragement from hospital management must be practically with the intention to use EMR consistently.

In healthcare delivery the use of EMR can increase the efficiency with the development of information technology. The information technology definitely gives the huge usage towards the changes especially in healthcare today. By having EMR, it will be one of the solutions to address some issues of medical records.

Someday, EMR will give the practitioners new approach when patient that is treated have allergic on medication, thus it give the newest research related to the treatment modalities hence, it can organizing the volumes of information of patient's chronic condition. EMR also be able to modified information of the patient accessibility through tools for example when get connected with World Wide Web (web services). This proficiency will allow retrieval the information at any time.

Moreover, EMR help to smooth the activities directly through the friendly interface such as decision support quality management and results of the reports because it has capability to create a comprehensive record.

Strategies for staff unaware of effective records management

Uwaifa [26] stated that the vital element of records management is necessity of created records to maintain for future use. It is needed to have proper storage and filing system to assist easy retrieval of records. The storage facilities such as shelves, rack, cabinets and others must in a good condition. Furthermore, the successful records management can support the organization to overcome the unexpected event like audits and disasters.

Additionally, it helps to keep stakeholder's interest such as staff, client, policy makers and others. It aid fulfilling the audit requirements, gives evidence for legal action and preserves organizational memory. Records management cover the scope of records, content, context, requirements in access, use, risks assessment, safety and others that gives advantages in managing records [27].

A broad record management practice in the organization must create filing system in storage area by using alphabetical, numeric, or others according to the arrangement after records inventory is completed [28]. They said again, in manage the storage of records are not merely comprise the decision to choose suppliers and facilities as well as, the issue on safety and environment condition.

Moreover, the records retention and disposal is one of important aspect in records management that organization need to determine records that need to be keep and how long records should be retain and preserve. Saffady [29] said the organization must prepare suitable disposal schedule for records are no longer use that needing procedures and policies that approved.

5. Conceptual Framework

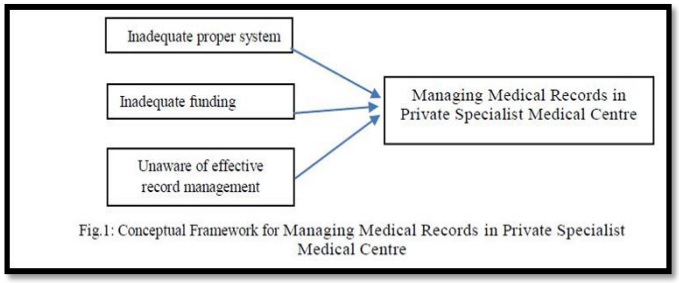


Fig.1: Conceptual Framework for Managing Medical Records in Private Specialist Medical Centre

6. Methodology

A qualitative method research design will be adopted. The researcher will use purposive sampling. This study also include semi-structured and face-to-face interview will be used to obtain the information. There are 6 respondents will be identified which from Medical Records Department. They will be given some questions to investigate the challenge of managing medical records, their duties and responsibilities, to determine inadequate proper system, to determine the inadequate funding and to determine the awareness of effective records management among staff. The data will be analyzed using ATLAS.ti and using the thematic analysis for data analysis.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, in managing medical records in Specialist Medical Centre is essential in daily operations which improve the performance of healthcare and increase productivity especially in Medical Records Department. All of the actions are under Head of Department (HoD) of Medical Records Department responsibilities in managing medical records. Medical record must according with the policy and standard required to keep records in effective ways. With the good practice of records management, carries simple of administration tasks.

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