What Is a Medical Scribe?

Joint Commission Definition: A scribe is an unlicensed individual that is hired to enter information into an electronic medical record (EMR) or electronic health record (EHR) at a physician’s direction.

What Do Medical Scribes Do?

+ Physically or virtually follow the provider into the examination room
+ Enter information room
+ Navigate/locate information in the EHR
+ Coding Assistance

Most frequently used in emergency departments and Physician Practices.
Regulating the Use of Medical Scribes

- Personnel used as medical scribes are not regulated
- The Joint Commission does not encourage or prohibit the use of scribes
- CMS regulations do not address scribes; however, CMS does have published guidelines

How Medical Scribes Can Improve Efficiency In An Electronic Environment

- Reported benefits from the use of scribes include:
  - Increased efficiency/productivity
  - Increased client satisfaction
  - Decreased physician burnout and increased physician satisfaction
  - Better quality patient-provider interactions
  - Improved quality of care

Limitations to What Medical Scribes Can Do for Physician Practices

- Scribes should not:
  - Perform clinical services
  - Make independent decisions/translations
  - Enter orders
  - Work simultaneously as a clinical assistant/NPP
Evaluating Regulatory Risks of Different Medical Scribe Arrangements

- CMS does not regulate the use of scribes; however, it has clarified that scribes are not required to sign or date documentation.
- Scribes can help physicians to document clearly the detail of the level of services provided.
  - However, take care to avoid taking actions that can result in potential documentation, billing and coding, and medical errors, including:
    - Using a scribe to bill at a higher level than allowed for services
    - Using a scribe to bill for services not actually provided
    - Failing to thoroughly review the accuracy of a scribe's work

Medical Scribes in the Virtual World

- Though scribes are most often physically present with the provider during the patient examination, some providers also use virtual scribes.
- However, virtual scribes place providers at an increased risk of cyber attacks.

Compliance Best Practices for Evaluating and Monitoring Scribe Services

- Clarify the scribe's qualifications and responsibilities in the job description.
  - Require the scribe to sign an agreement recognizing their job duties and their limited role in the practice
- Conduct orientation and training specific to the scribe's role in the organization. Topics may include:
  - Medical Terminology and Spelling
  - Anatomy
  - General Compliance (to include Stark Law and AKS)
  - HIPAA
  - Risk Mitigation
  - Computer Skills
  - MACRA
  - The Joint Commission's Accountability Measures
Compliance Best Practices for Evaluating and Monitoring Medical Scribe Services

- Review applicable laws and guidelines to ensure that scribes are being used properly
- Verify compliance with any applicable third party payer guidelines
- Notify patients of the use of scribes
- Require the physician or practitioner to carefully review and authenticate scribed entries by entering a signature, date, and time
  - Do not allow scribes to enter the date and time
  - Do not allow a physician’s signature stamp to be used to authenticate
  - Do not delegate the authenticate task

How to Handle Scribes Who Are Performing Other Services Such as Patient Care?

- Appropriate Policies and Procedures
- Educate, Educate, Educate!
- Evaluate and Audit (Compliance Work-Plan)
- Re-Educate Based on Findings
- Disciplinary Action
Developing Appropriate Policies and Procedures

+ Must be an unlicensed person, not involved in patient care or treatment, specifically hired to enter information into the EHR.
  + Same applies to Surrogate Dictator.
+ Have competency training.
+ Scribes may locate and retrieve prior test results but are not allowed to enter orders (tests or otherwise).
+ Scribes may not address system alerts.

3607.6 Medical Scribe or Surrogate Dictator Policy (CHSPSC)

Developing Appropriate Policies and Procedures

+ Scribes must have their own unique user ID and password.
+ Scribes are required by policy to identify themselves, sign/date and attest to documentation along with the Provider.
+ Authentication must be completed by both the Scribe and Provider before either leave the patient care area.
+ Scribes may not enter billing codes or perform any billing related functions.

3607.6 Medical Scribe or Surrogate Dictator Policy (CHSPSC)

Investigation & Corrective Actions

+ NPP acting as Scribe
+ Scribe documentation not supporting CMS, Joint Commission or policy guidelines
+ Orders entered by the Scribe
Questions?

Danielle Sloane
dслоane@bassberry.com
(615) 742-7763

R. Kevin Townsend
richard_townsend@chs.net
(615) 628-6632