

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

A Questionnaire-based Study on Awareness and Knowledge of 'Medical Records' among Interns in a Tertiary care Hospital in Northern Karnataka

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Abstract:

In the near past, doctors are considered God by the patients but, in this era, Doctors are threatened by patients by increasing trends of complaints & litigations against doctors. The doctors should have optimum knowledge in delivering safe health care in an unbiased standardized way. Hence it is necessary to evaluate awareness and knowledge of 'Medical Records among budding Doctors. The present study was conducted to assess the awareness and knowledge of Medical Records among the Interns. This was a questionnaire based study carried out at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, KAHER. A predesigned self-structured multiple-choice questionnaire containing 20 questions was framed based on awareness and knowledge and was prepared in Google forms and sent to 123 Interns who were posted in various departments after obtaining informed consent. The results obtained in the study showed that the interns had enough awareness and knowledge about medical records and their purpose but they lagged in knowledge in maintaining MLC records and also lagged in awareness of charges for getting photocopies of medical records. Overall awareness and knowledge of medical records among our interns are better compared to peers but need to be enhanced to promote knowledge of electronic health data and their importance in their future practice.

Keywords: Interns; Awareness; Knowledge; Medical records; Electronic health records.

Introduction:

Medical records are the systematic documentation of the patient's personal and social data, history of his or her ailment, clinical findings, investigations, diagnosis, treatment given, an account of following up, and outcome.¹ The medical records are the core of the Health Information system in the hospital.² The Medical Records Department (MRD) plays multiple roles in every hospital, which provides services to the patients, and hospitals and also plays a key role in health promotion and patient care quality. Therefore, evaluation of the services provided in this department is critical.³ Doctors should have reasonable knowledge of medical records in delivering safe health care in an unbiased standardized way. Forensic Medicine subject is usually dealing with the teaching of medical law and ethics in Indian medical education set up.⁴ Medical record plays a vital role in all cases, especially Medicolegal cases. For example, when a victim passed away in a road traffic accident, to claim insurance, MRD provides details of the concerned victim when asked by relatives. Nowadays everything had made easy using an electronic health record system. Taking into consideration the benefits and importance of medical records, the present study is aimed to assess the awareness and knowledge of intern doctors regarding

medical records.

Materials and methods:

This Questionnaire study was carried out at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, KAHER after obtaining Institutional ethical clearance. A predesigned self-structured multiple-choice Questionnaire containing 20 questions was framed about the awareness and knowledge regarding medical records and was prepared in Google forms and sent to all the interns who were posted in various departments, among which 123 volunteering Interns were included in the study after obtaining informed consent. Responses were collected and analyzed and percentages were calculated.

Results:

It was observed from table.1, that 89.4% of the Interns were aware of Medical Record Department and only 10.6% of Interns were unaware. Totally 87.8% of the Interns were aware of the abbreviation for MRD and only 12.2 % of interns were unaware of it. Most of the interns around 84.6% were aware of the purpose of MRD and only 15.4% of the Interns were unaware of it. Almost 95.9% of the interns were aware that the maintenance of patient records is the legal duty of the hospital and only 4.1% of the interns were unaware. A total of 82.9% of the interns were aware that the patient's records are the property of the patient, whereas only 17.1% of interns were unaware of it. Most of the interns, around 60.2% were aware of the duration of the preservation of hospital records, whereas 39.8% of the interns were unaware of it. Only 40.7% of the interns were aware of the charges for getting photocopies of medical records, whereas the remaining 59.3% of

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them were unaware of it. Most of the interns, around 61.8% were aware of how to issue medical records when required by the patients, and the remaining 38.2% of interns were unaware of it. Totally 78.9% of the interns were aware that failure to provide medical records when asked by the patient is punishable and the remaining 21.1% of interns were not aware of it. Similarly, 72.4% of interns were aware of Electronic Health Records and only 27.6% of interns were not aware of Electronic Health Records.

It was observed from Table.2, that 100% of the Interns have enough knowledge of medical records. Almost 97.6% of the interns answered correctly that doctors are legally bound to maintain records in India and only 2.4% of them answered incorrectly. Only 45.5% of the interns answered correctly that the non-MLC records should be stored for 3 years and the remaining 54.5% of the interns answered incorrectly. Almost 64.2% of the interns know how to maintain medical records and only 35.8% of the interns don't have knowledge about it. Only 45.5% of the

Table 1. Percentage of interns having awareness regarding medical records.

Sl. No	Questions	Correct Response
1	Are you aware of MRD?	Yes (89.4%)
2	Are you aware of the abbreviation for MRD?	Yes (87.8%)
3	Are you aware of the purpose of MRD?	Yes (84.6%)
4	Are you aware that the maintenance of patient records is the legal duty of the hospital?	Yes (95.9%)
5	Are you aware that the Patient's records are the property of the patient?	Yes (82.9%)
6	Are you aware of the duration of the preservation of hospital records?	Yes (60.2%)
7	Are you aware of the charges for getting photocopies of medical records?	Yes (40.7%)
8	Are you aware of how to issue medical records when required by the patients?	Yes (61.8%)
9	Are you aware that failure to provide medical records when asked by the patient is punishable?	Yes (78.9%)
10	Are you aware of Electronic Health Records?	Yes (72.4%)

Table 2. Percentage of interns having knowledge on medical records.

Sl. No	Questions	Correct Response
11	Is medical record medico-legally important?	100%
12	Are Doctors legally bound to maintain records in India?	97.6%
13	How long the non-MLC records should be stored?	45.5%
14	Do you know how to maintain medical records?	64.2%
15	How long the MLC records should be stored?	45.5%
16	Will you report HIV positive case to his relatives under requisition without his knowledge?	81.3%
17	Will the death certificate be available in MRD?	83.7%
18	Will an MLC copy be available in MRD?	94.3%
19	What is the punishment for issuing a false certificate?	16.3%
20	Can reports of diagnostic aids be useful as an antemortem record?	94.3%

interns answered correctly that the MLC records should be stored for lifelong and the remaining 54.5% of the interns answered incorrectly. Totally 81.3% of interns know the maintenance of professional secrecy in the case of HIV, whereas 18.7% of them do not have enough knowledge about it. A total of 83.7% of the interns know about storing death certificates in MRD and only

Annexure:

Sl. No	Questions	Response
Awareness based Questions		
1	Are you aware of MRD?	Yes/No
2	Are you aware of the abbreviation for MRD?	Yes/No
3	Are you aware of the purpose of MRD?	Yes/No
4	Are you aware that the maintenance of patient records is the legal duty of the hospital?	Yes/No
5	Are you aware that the Patient's records are the property of the patient?	Yes/No
6	Are you aware of the duration of the preservation of hospital records?	Yes/No
7	Are you aware of the charges for getting photocopies of medical records?	Yes/No
8	Are you aware of how to issue medical records when required by the patients?	Yes/No
9	Are you aware that failure to provide medical records when asked by the patient is punishable?	Yes/No
10	Are you aware of Electronic Health Records?	Yes/No
Knowledge-based Questions		
11	Is medical record medico-legally important?	Yes/No
12	Are Doctors legally bound to maintain records in India?	Yes/No
13	How long the non-MLC records should be stored?	a)3 years b)5 years c)7 years d)lifelong
14	Do you know how to maintain medical records?	Yes/No
15	How long the MLC records should be stored?	a)3 years b)5 years c)7 years d)lifelong
16	Will you report HIV positive case to his relatives under requisition without his knowledge?	Yes/No
17	Will the death certificate be available in MRD?	Yes/No
18	Will an MLC copy be available in MRD?	Yes/No
19	What is the punishment for issuing a false certificate?	a) 5 years b) 7 years c) 10 years d) 3 years
20	Can reports of diagnostic aids be useful as an antemortem record?	Yes/No

16.3% of the intern do not have knowledge about it. Almost 94.3% of the interns know about the storage of MLC copies in MRD and only 5.7% of them do not know about it. Only 16.3% of the interns answered correctly that the punishment for issuing a false certificate is 7 years and the remaining 83.7% of them answered incorrectly. Almost 94.3% of the interns know that diagnostic aids will be useful for antemortem records and only 5.7% of them do not know about it.

Discussion:

The present study was carried out on 123 interns of Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, KAHER who were posted in various departments after obtaining informed consent. The study showed that the interns had enough awareness and knowledge about medical records and their purpose but they lagged in some knowledge of maintaining MLC records and lagged awareness towards charges for getting photocopies of medical records.

A similar study was conducted by Parmar P, et al in the year 2020, to assess awareness among Intern Doctors about Medical Records and Duty of Doctors in Tertiary Care Hospital, Valsad, they found that Intern doctors had no awareness regarding the duration of preservation of hospital records and were not sure of various aspects of medical records and duty of doctors. This study was in concordance with our study as our interns too lagged in knowledge regarding the preservation of medical records.⁵

A similar study was conducted by Behura SS et al in the year 2020, to assess the awareness and knowledge of dental records in Forensic Dentistry among Undergraduate dental students, found that 73.1% students were aware about legal maintenance of medical records and 67.4 % of them know the duration of preservation of medical records. This study findings were inconsistent with our study as our interns had lagged in knowledge regarding the preservation of medical records.⁸

Conclusion:

This present study was an endeavor to assess the awareness and knowledge regarding medical records among Interns. In this era, the public has enough awareness and knowledge about medical records using the internet and electronic media. Hence there are many suits and litigations against doctors, which is an immediate concern to the medical fraternity. So every doctor must acquaint themselves with laws and regulations that are concerned with medical records. This will result in the fulfilment of ethical, moral, and legal obligations in their duties.⁷

Keeping in view of the present study the interns had enough awareness and knowledge about medical records and their purpose but they lagged in some knowledge of maintaining MLC records and lagged awareness towards charges for getting photocopies of medical records. This implies that the curriculum has improved but also needs to be enhanced to promote knowledge of electronic health data and its importance in their future practice to create new educational opportunities.

Recommendations:

Based on the observations in our study, we recommend the following suggestions to enhance the knowledge and confidence in maintaining medical records.

- Students should be posted in casualty postings under forensic medicine department supervision periodically from MBBS professional year I which will enhance several fundamental skills for their future practice.
- The knowledge of medical records can also be increased by conducting periodic online zoom meetings by the Dept. of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology.
- Interns are encouraged to attend regular CMEs and workshops on Medical records to increase awareness and to update their knowledge of electronic health records in the

medical practice.

- Interns will also acquire various skills in accessing medical records in their future practice. Interns' experience with EHRs is better compared to paper medical records.
- Providing read-only access restricts medical students' educational experience.
- Incorporating EHR access into the medical curriculum is essential as it will provide new educational opportunities that were not available before.⁶

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