

Medical Secretaries and Medical Device Technology: Bridging Administrative and Clinical Functions"

Reham Fahad Mani¹, Salma Mansour Shawai Awam², Aishah Ahmed Msmaly³, Amnah Mohammed Jafari⁴, Haitham Falgi Aljabir⁵, Fayez Ahmed Arishi⁶, Amal Abdullah Essa Hawi⁷, Raed Yahya AlQahtani⁸, AFRAH AHMAD Essa MASMALI⁹, Norah Shujja Alsubaie¹⁰

1. Medical Secretary, King Fahad Central Hospital, Abu Arish Jizan
2. Medical Secretary, King Fahad Central Hospital, Abu Arish Jizan
3. Medical Secretary, King Fahad Central Hospital, Jizan
4. Medical Secretary, King Fahad Central Hospital, Jizan
5. Medical secretariat, Ministry of Health Office in Al Qunfudhah Governorate
6. Medical secretariat, Ministry of Health Office in Al Qunfudhah Governorate
7. Medical Secretary, Bisha
8. Medical devices Specialist, Ministry of Health Office in Al Qunfudhah Governorate, Alqunfudhah
9. Medical Secretary, Bisha, Aseer Health Cluster- nitaqbisha
10. Medical secretarial technician, Specialized Dental Center in Riyadh

Abstract

Medical secretaries now often work with electronic health records (EHRs), patient management systems, and telemedicine platforms. These systems require a level of technical proficiency, meaning that secretaries need to stay updated with the latest technologies. They are also responsible for ensuring that clinical data is accurately entered into systems, processed correctly, and communicated to the right medical professionals in real time. As healthcare continues to embrace digital transformation and medical device technology becomes increasingly sophisticated, medical secretaries are poised to play a crucial role in bridging the gap between administrative and clinical functions. Their evolving responsibilities will ensure that healthcare systems run smoothly, patient care remains at the forefront, and technology is leveraged efficiently to improve both operational and clinical outcomes

Keywords: Medical secretaries, health records, and Medical Device Technology

I. Introduction

Medical secretaries play a pivotal role in the smooth operation of healthcare facilities by handling administrative tasks, but their roles are becoming increasingly intertwined with advancements in medical device technology. This convergence brings together administrative functions with clinical processes, creating a unique space for medical secretaries to bridge the gap between these two crucial aspects of healthcare delivery. (Peter et al., 2020)

II. The Evolving Role of Medical Secretaries

Historically, medical secretaries were focused primarily on administrative tasks, such as scheduling appointments, managing patient records, coordinating communications between patients and healthcare providers, and ensuring the smooth running of office operations. However, as healthcare continues to embrace technological advancements, the scope of their responsibilities is expanding. (Aljamali & Almuhan, 2021)

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III. The Role of Medical Device Technology

Medical devices play a vital role in patient care, ranging from diagnostic tools like MRI machines to therapeutic devices such as ventilators. These devices often generate valuable clinical data that needs to be accurately recorded and communicated between clinical and administrative teams. As medical technology evolves, the role of medical secretaries extends into the management and processing of data generated by these devices. (Huusko et al., 2023)

For example:(Ming et al., 2022)

- **Device Integration:** Many modern medical devices are integrated with hospital information systems (HIS) and EHR platforms. Medical secretaries may be responsible for ensuring that data from these devices is correctly linked to patient records, facilitating smoother transitions between administrative and clinical tasks.
- **Training and Troubleshooting:** As healthcare settings adopt new technologies, medical secretaries might also assist with training staff in using devices, or act as a liaison for troubleshooting minor issues with equipment.
- **Compliance and Documentation:** Medical devices are subject to strict regulatory standards. Medical secretaries help ensure that all the necessary documentation is completed accurately for both administrative and compliance purposes.(Cordeiro, 2021)

IV. Bridging Administrative and Clinical Functions

The integration of medical device technology with administrative tasks creates a collaborative environment where medical secretaries have a crucial role in linking administrative functions with clinical activities. They help ensure that patient care is not disrupted due to technical difficulties, assist in scheduling procedures involving medical devices, and ensure compliance with regulations governing medical device usage.(Fairgrieve et al., 2020)

- **Efficiency:** By managing both the administrative side and the technical aspects of medical devices, medical secretaries help streamline operations, making sure that clinical teams can focus on patient care without being bogged down by logistical challenges.
- **Patient Communication:** They act as the primary point of contact between patients and the healthcare system, helping patients navigate the use of advanced medical devices, from preparing for procedures to understanding how devices will be used in their care.
- **Data Management:** Medical secretaries often oversee the collection, storage, and analysis of clinical data from medical devices. This responsibility can extend to ensuring that the data is presented in a way that is both accurate and actionable for medical staff.(Howard, 2021)

The integration of AI and machine learning into medical devices is expected to further expand the role of medical secretaries. These technologies will increasingly require secretaries to manage complex systems, interpret clinical data, and coordinate the use of advanced diagnostic and treatment tools. In the future, medical secretaries may also play a more active role in data analytics, using insights derived from medical devices to optimize healthcare processes, reduce errors, and improve patient outcomes. This will necessitate an evolving skill set, combining administrative expertise with technological proficiency.(Jarman et al., 2021)

Diagnostic work is often understood as a particular type of collaborative work that is “clinical” or “medical” at its core. So it is the work of clinicians, ranging from physicians assessing patients, to technicians running tests, and nurses tending to patients while taking note of their condition. Secretaries, from this perspective, are the “right hand” of clinicians, ensuring that physicians, test results, and patients are brought together at the right time and place. Despite the fact that secretaries are central to the core of clinical work (defined by Bardram as examining the patient’s illness and condition, requesting and interpreting clinical information, decision-making concerning the patient’s illness and condition, further medical treatment of the patient’s illness and condition, and monitoring the effect of it), and that diagnostic work is defined in relation to this core clinical work, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the role of secretaries in diagnosis.(Carmody et al., 2021)

This study empirically investigates the role of secretaries in both a radiology department and a medical department. Secretaries are central to diagnostic work and identify four particular activities where this is evident when secretaries: a) examine the patient’s condition, b) interpret the clinical information, c) monitor the follow-up, and d) further inform the patient’s trajectory. These activities constitute an intersection of clinical and administrative work where secretaries become involved in the handling of patients through the collaborative electronic information systems. The formal distribution of power when secretaries become involved in diagnosis is not the focus; the analysis focuses strictly on how to further specify the secretaries’ role(Qureshi et al., 2020)

Studies of medical secretaries in the context of Danish public hospitals argue that the profession carries out a wide range of patient-oriented and health-administrative tasks and support to clinicians’ work, stretching far beyond simply “being secretary to the physician” and transcribing medical notes. Medical secretaries are central to the work in and around patient records. Studies highlight medical secretaries acting as “organisational glue” or [the] connecting thread between other

professional groups at the hospital”—a quality partly attributed to the decentralized distribution of medical secretaries at ward level in Danish hospitals, which affords deep domain knowledge of the medical specialty they work in. Other studies argue that medical secretaries do not solely operate in administration; that they are positioned at the “‘intersection’ of formally separate but practically enmeshed practices, namely administrative and clinical work”.(Spitzenberger et al., 2022)

Thus, they support and are a direct part of clinical work, making professional judgements informed by a unique combination of knowledge about medicine, administration, and care pathways. The work of medical secretaries, however, as that of many other clerical workers, often gets relegated to the background, regarded as automatable, routine work of little value. New electronic health record (EHR) systems have been partly financed through the redundancy of medical secretaries. This occurred most recently between 2017 and 2018, with the implementation of the EPIC EHR system in two Danish regions(Liao & Carbonell, 2023)

Furthermore, some healthcare professionals’ current administrative tasks may be managed (or at least assisted) by technology or removed from the workflow routine . However, the digitalisation in healthcare should be adopted thoughtfully and might be implemented more successfully with active employee involvement. Therefore, to comprehend the impacts of digitalisation on healthcare workplaces, it is essential to first understand the impact of digitalisation on the tasks performed and the workforce. However, the effects are often unpredictable .(Park et al., 2020)

There is growing evidence on how clinicians experience healthcare digitalisation . Nonetheless, in light of rapid technological progress, more in-depth evidence is required to explore effects of healthcare digitalisation on workplace settings , particularly regarding non-clinical occupations such as secretaries. Medical secretaries play an essential role in ensuring regularity, workflow and serviceability in today’s healthcare system. As a non-clinical healthcare occupation, they are essential when implementing healthcare digitalisation processes .(Musty, 2023)

However, there is a lack of evidence regarding how the role of medical secretary is characterised as an occupation. Medical secretaries, among other non-clinical healthcare staff, seem to be underrepresented in research . Further research is thus needed on medical secretaries’ experiences of digital transformation and the occupation’s level of influence over these changes . In accordance with previous recommendations to broaden the understanding of what medical secretaries do and what kind of workplace changes they face, the purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore how medical secretaries experience digital transformation in a Swedish healthcare organisation, with a focus on workplace climate and health.(Fairgrieve et al., 2020)

The exact origin of the medical secretary occupation is difficult to determine in terms of time and place. However, at the end of the 19th century, it was documented that administrative tasks were carried out by “administrative staff” in European healthcare settings . The medical secretary occupation was officially known as the doctors’ secretary who provided administrative ease for doctors . In today’s healthcare system, the medical secretary plays a crucial role in supporting the workflow, regularity and serviceability of the healthcare system . By performing administrative tasks medical secretaries enable clinicians to devote more time to their patients , thereby contributing to the efficiency of workplace routines .(Cordeiro, 2021)

The core tasks of medical secretaries include handling a variety of paperwork, such as filing and editing documents, printing clinical information , transcribing and filing clinicians’ dictations, locating files , staffing the reception and providing general clerical support, often in a collaborative manner between occupations. The work routines of medical secretaries may also include patient contact and handling of clinical test results of patients . Medical secretaries play a crucial role as a resource in diagnostic work, placing their responsibilities at the forefront. Ensuring the quality and completeness of documentation is also part of their tasks , and applying the clinic-specific knowledge when in the contact with patients , as well as when transcribing clinician’s dictations.(Liao & Carbonell, 2023)

V. Conclusion

As healthcare continues to embrace digital transformation and medical device technology becomes increasingly sophisticated, medical secretaries are poised to play a crucial role in bridging the gap between administrative and clinical functions. Their evolving responsibilities will ensure that

healthcare systems run smoothly, patient care remains at the forefront, and technology is leveraged efficiently to improve both operational and clinical outcomes.(Aljamali& Almuhana, 2021)

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