
OPD records – Doctor's FIR of the patient.

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OPD (Out Patient Department) is the first point of contact between the doctor and the patient. The patient may be visiting for the first time, he may be referred by some doctor or may have come on his own will to get treated by the doctor. Considering the number of patients that doctors attend in the OPD, it is difficult for any doctor to keep in mind the medical records or the history of each and every patient. It therefore becomes important in most of the cases to get comprehensive information of the patient. Following are a few tips or pointers that need to be kept in mind for OPD documentation.

1. Most of the times the patient's primary information is taken verbally. It is always advisable to get all the information of the patient by filling a questionnaire, asking him about all his past and present illnesses. This has multiple advantages – one - you do not skip any information that you may forget to ask or which the patient may find irrelevant (yes patients do act over smart sometimes!), second - you have handwritten proof of the information the patient has given you and third - you get all the information at a glance, it helps in better diagnosis.
2. Always take an ID proof of the patient. In a unique MLC case, it is observed the patient was admitted in the hospital with a fake identity. It came to the doctor's notice when the police landed up in the hospital enquiring about the patient. Some of the patients do find it rude to be asked for an ID proof. You can always say it is mandatory by the government.
3. Note every visit of the patient to the clinic. Whenever a patient visits the clinic note it down in your OPD register or OPD paper. It becomes a follow up record of the patient. Especially in medico legal cases it will be a proof whether a patient has/hasn't followed up with the doctor.
4. Take a consent. Even though the patient has come to you of his own will i.e. he has given an implied consent to the doctor. But due to medico legal problems it is advisable that you take a consent even if you give an injection to the patient.
5. Never hand over your Records to the patients. Your findings and records are your property; they should be kept in the hospital/clinic. Patients have a bad habit of taking your records and going for a second opinion. If the next doctor has a different opinion than you have, it may leads to a conflict between you and the patient

6. All OPD records need to be stored for 5 years. You can store them in any form that you wish, may it be digital or manual. Only hand over the Prescription and the Investigation reports to the patient.

OPD records are like a FIR. They have to be comprehensive, systematic and chronological. Due to busy schedule of doctors the OPD records may be neglected but they are the foundation of your future treatment for the patient and hence need to be taken with utmost care.