

Ethics After Hours

Medical Scribes

White Coat, Black Art w/ Dr Bryan Goldman (podcast)

Summary¹

In this episode of White Coat, Black Art, Dr. Bryan Goldman looks into the pros and cons of using medical scribes in the Emergency Department (ED). At the Queensway Carlton Hospital in Ottawa, Dr. Peter Graves runs a company known as Medical Scribes of Canada. The company currently employs 20 scribes in Canada. In 2015, Queensway Carlton Hospital ran a pilot project to determine the effects of using scribes in the ED. The scribes follow the doctor and are responsible for medical record keeping during the medical consultation. The pilot project showed that 82% of doctors who used scribes were able to see more patients per hour. Moreover, a 13% increase in efficiency was reported, but according to Dr. Graves, efficiency has been seen to increase up to 20% as doctors get more used to using the scribes.

Podcast

Duration: 14 min 47 sec.

Air date: September 26, 2017

Available online: <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/whitecoat/medical-scribes-1.4313564>

Questions:

- In your opinion, is the use of scribes merely a productivity tool?
- Should scribes be used widely in clinical consultations? Why/why not?
- How can patients benefit from the use of scribes?
- Should patients be allowed to say no to having a scribe present during a consultation? Why/why not?
- What are some of the concerns that patients may have around the use of scribes? Do these raise specifically ethical questions?
- From a health care practitioner's perspective, would you have any concerns about using a scribe to assist with medical record keeping?
- Do you think that the use of scribes is an appropriate response to the challenge of scarce resources in the health care system?

¹ Summary is adapted from White Coat, Black Art's programme website.