

Letter writing audit

Benefits of letter writing audit

- Good communication between healthcare professionals is essential.
- Improves continuity of care for the patient
- Saves the healthcare professional time when letters are succinct and to the point
- Key factors only reduce practice time spent on letter writing.

Criteria for a letter writing audit could include:

- Letters should be written within 48 hours of the consultation.
- No errors in spelling or grammar.
- Limited to key pieces of information, including:
 - Patient's full postal address
 - Patient's date of birth
 - Summary of treatment given including advice
 - Outcome to date
 - What specifically is being requested e.g. imaging or other investigation, specialist appointment , or an appointment with another healthcare professional
- Relatively brief, i.e. no more than one page of A4 and 250 words

Letter writing audit – data collection form

Patient identifier	<input type="text"/>		
Practice address including postcode	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Contact telephone number	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Email address	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Website address	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Patient's name	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Patient's date of birth	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Patient's address including postcode	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Summary of patient's presenting symptoms	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Summary of all treatment given to patient including self-management and advice	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Summary of patient's progress to date	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Clear statement of what action is Requested by your letter	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Presence of spelling mistakes	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Number of words in the body of the letter	_____		

This audit tool is based on the work by Rees, 1999^{1,2}.

1. Rees R. <http://www.acumedic.com/books/bk3236.pdf>
2. Rees R: http://www.rccm.org.uk/static/Research_patient.aspx