

**ED SCRIBES**  
**JOHN F. KENNEDY MEDICAL CENTER**

**Publication Year: 2008**

**Summary:**

Scribes work with physicians as they see patients to record information electronically in real time, allowing physicians to spend their time with patients rather than entering information.

**Hospital:** John F. Kennedy Medical Center

**Location:** 65 James Street  
Edison, NJ 08818

**Category:**

- C: Clinician Initial Evaluation & Throughput

**Key Words:**

- Communication
- Information Systems
- Rapid Intake
- Wait Times

**Hospital Metrics:**

*(Taken from the American Hospital Directory)*

- Annual ED Volume: 23,992
- Hospital Beds: 424
- Ownership: Not-for-profit
- Trauma Level: Not Designated
- Teaching Status: Yes

**Tools Provided:**

- None

**Clinical Areas Affected:**

- Emergency Department

**Staff Involved:**

- ED Staff
- Physicians

## **Innovation**

After an electronic records system was instituted in the emergency department (ED), JFK Medical Center began a scribe program. Scribes work with physicians as they see patients to record information electronically in real time. This allows physicians to spend their time with patients instead of entering information into the electronic system.

## **Results**

It is difficult to quantify the impact of the scribes on the physicians' time at the bedside, but the overall impact of the move to the IBEX electronic record and tracking system has been very beneficial. In the period since implementation, revenue has increased by 15 percent and patient satisfaction scores have risen. The scribes allow the advantages of the records and tracking system to be fully exploited without the side effect of physicians being away from the bedside at a computer.

## **Innovation Implementation**

To fulfill the scribe role, the department hired physician assistant students who had completed at least one year of school. The ED scribes work with the department's 12 emergency physicians, 5 pediatric emergency physicians and 5 physician assistants. According to ED Chair Michael Cali, MD, the scribes take down the history and physical information as verbalized by the physician and transcribe the information into the IBEX system's electronic record, which allows instant printing of the chart. While the scribe is transcribing, the practitioner can spend more time with patients.

Dr. Cali reports that there was initially some resistance from the department's physicians and physician assistants about taking someone with them to the patient's bedside, but they have become accustomed to this. Additionally, the scribes required some instruction from the physicians, but although the learning curve was steep, it was fast. It is rare that a patient does not want anyone other than the physician at bedside.

## **Advice and Lessons Learned**

Dr. Cali reports that the biggest challenge is getting the right people for the job. The scribes need to have a medical background, a good personality, and the ability to work well with the emergency physicians. The ability to transcribe well is not enough. The use of physician assistant (PA) students with at least one year of school is ideal because they possess some medical knowledge but can be hired inexpensively (\$15 per hour).