

Departmental case notes audit: A quality assurance measure in a changing organizational climate

Mansoor Dilnawaz, Nadia Iftikhar*

Dermatology Department, Combined Military Hospital (CMH), Lahore

* Dermatology Department, Military Hospital (MH), Rawalpindi

Abstract

Background A clinical audit measures practice against standards. It aims to deliver safe and quality care through a systematic approach. The research focuses on the question, “what is the right thing to do?” whereas the audit aims to see if we are doing the right thing in the right way.¹⁻⁴

Aims and Objectives To highlight the importance of meticulous record keeping in clinical case notes.

Methods 20 case notes were examined from the dermatology ward. The method of data collection was retrospective. The basis of proposal was local guidelines. The audit type was Process. The standard set was “100%.”

Results The result showed 75% compliance with our local guidelines in the analyzed case sets.

Key words

Clinical audit, quality, safety.

Introduction

Clinical audit falls under the domain of clinical governance. It is a key component, which aims to provide safe and quality clinical care.² It is important to incorporate it at all levels of service delivery. The staff should be provided with training and protected time to undertake it on a regular basis.¹⁻⁴ Audit runs in the form of a spiral and aims to bring about incremental improvement in a healthcare system. Standards form the basis of audit and they are set on achievable goals and perceived importance in a given setting and health care system.⁵⁻¹⁰

Patients and Methods

20 case notes were analyzed from the dermatology ward. The method of **data collection** was retrospective. The **basis of proposal** was local guidelines. The **audit type** was Process. **The sample source** was case-notes from the dermatology ward. The **sample size** was 20. A data collection proforma was used. The collected data was analyzed according to the pre-set criteria and standards. The **criterion** was “there should be meticulous record keeping for all patients”. The **standards** were set at 100% within the domains that there should be:

- 1a. A hand written record?
- 1b. Is the clinician identified?
- 1c. Is it legible?
2. The patient should be identified on each page (name, personal number, age, disease)?
3. There should be a clear diagnosis or clinical problem?
4. There should be a clear management plan?

Address for correspondence

Col. Dr. Mansoor Dilnawaz
Department of Dermatology
Combined Military Hospital (CMH), Lahore
Email: mdilnawaz@gmail.com

The **inclusion criteria** included random analysis of case notes from in-patients. The **exclusion criteria** included outpatients notes.

Results

(Table 1 & Table 2) The above standards were met in most of the examined case notes. However in 25% of the notes, the patients were not categorically identified with their demographic details on each of the continuation sheets as per our local guidelines.

Discussion

Clinical audit in its true essence means are we practicing evidence-based medicine according to the set standards? It is an integral part of clinical governance. The aim is to provide safe and high quality care to the patients. It is a quality assurance measure and improves clinical care and service delivery. Audit identifies areas for improvement, education and training.⁴⁻⁶ An audit

can relate to **structure** which includes staffing and facilities, **process** like are checklists, protocols, guidelines, record keeping, waiting times, trainee's attendance, treatment and **outcome** for example satisfaction surveys.⁴⁻¹⁰ Clinical audit cycle identifies every step, responsibilities and purpose from the outset (**Figure 1**).

Medical record keeping lies at the heart of clinical care. It is vital to have an explicit, meticulous, legible and thorough care pathway and care plan for enhanced clinical care. This helps in avoiding adverse and untoward incidents in any healthcare organization. It is an integral part of day-to-day practice and relates to health care professionals at all levels.³⁻⁹

Summary

A summary of the audit is presented in (**Table 3**).

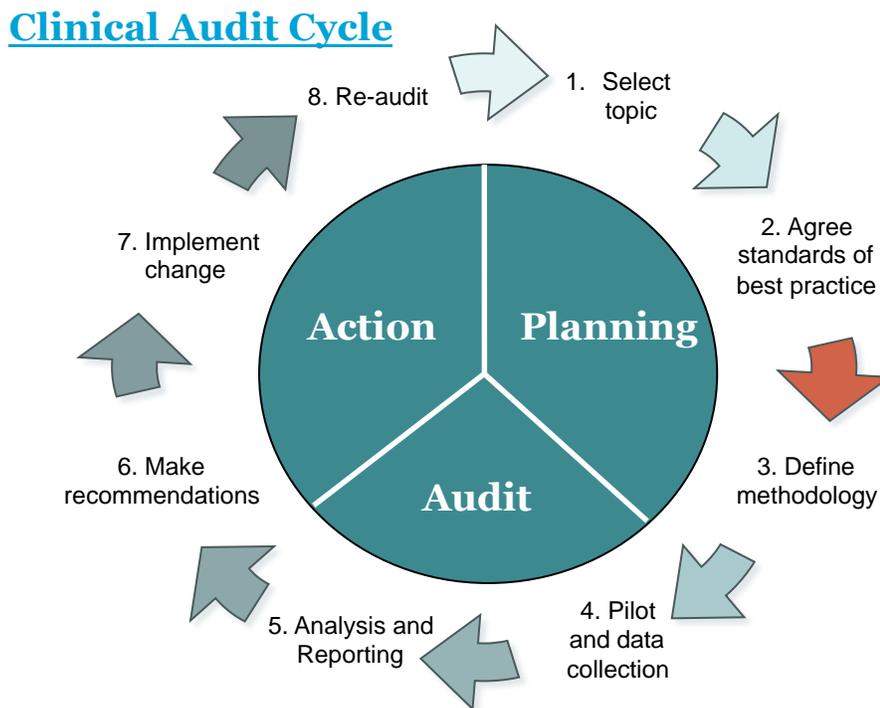


Figure 1 Clinical Audit Cycle.

Table 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1a										
1b	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1c										
2	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗		✓	✓	✓	✓
3										
4										

Table 2

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1a										
1b	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1c										
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
3										
4										

Table 3

Rationale	Meticulous record keeping
Objective(s)	To examine the standard and quality of in-patients notes
Project type	Process
Basis of proposal	Local guidelines
Criteria	There should be meticulous record keeping for all patients
Standard(s)	100% case-notes should have an explicit and legible management plan and demographic details
Sample source	Case-records of in-patients
Sample size	20 case-notes
Data collection/ analysis	Retrospective
Results	The result showed 75% compliance with our local guidelines
Recommendations	To rectify the areas for improvement
RE-AUDIT	6-months

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