

Hiring a Virtual Scribe for Your Practice

May 2018

Why do I Need a Virtual Scribe for My Practice?

An Answer to Physician Burn-out & Stress

Physicians make their money and make a difference by seeing patients. Yet doctors and their support staff are spending more and more time with documentation and administrative work. This has led to record levels of burn-out among healthcare professionals.

Recent research published by the American Medical Association bears out provider complaints about the unnecessary stress related to Electronic Medical Records and documentation.

In 2016, the AMA, along with the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Health Care System, identified EMRs as a primary pain point for doctors. AMA's research found that nearly 50 percent of doctors' work days are consumed with EMR data entry; while only 27 percent of their time is spent on clinical care.

Additionally, the *Medscape Lifestyle Report 2017* showed increased rates of provider dissatisfaction, due to the increased time burdens caused by EMRs and administrative work.

Independent research consistently shows that, before using a Virtual Scribe, a physician will struggle to see more than 20 patients per clinic day, while also completing his own EMR documentation.

However, using a Virtual Scribe, a physician can increase his patient volume and revenues by up to 20%-40% – and without the need to type or point and click all clinic day, or afterwards, in the EMR.

The following two illustrations show the differences between working *with* and *without* a Virtual Scribe from a time-savings and financial point-of-view:

Using a Virtual Scribe, a physician increases his patient volume 20%-40% – and without the need to type or point and click all clinic day, or afterwards, in the EMR.

A. Average Time-Saving Benefits of Using a Virtual Scribe:

	Per 8-hour clinic day	Per Week	Per Month	Per Year
Avg time lost to EMR data entry <i>WITHOUT</i> a Virtual Scribe	<i>3 hours</i>	<i>12 hours</i>	<i>40 hours</i>	<i>440 hours (18 days)</i>
Avg time with EMR data entry <i>WITH</i> a Virtual Scribe	.5 hours	3 hours	8 hours	90 hours (2.5 days)
Net Time Benefit with a Virtual Scribe	+ 2.5 hours	+ 9 hours	+ 32 hours	+ 350 hours (14.5 days)

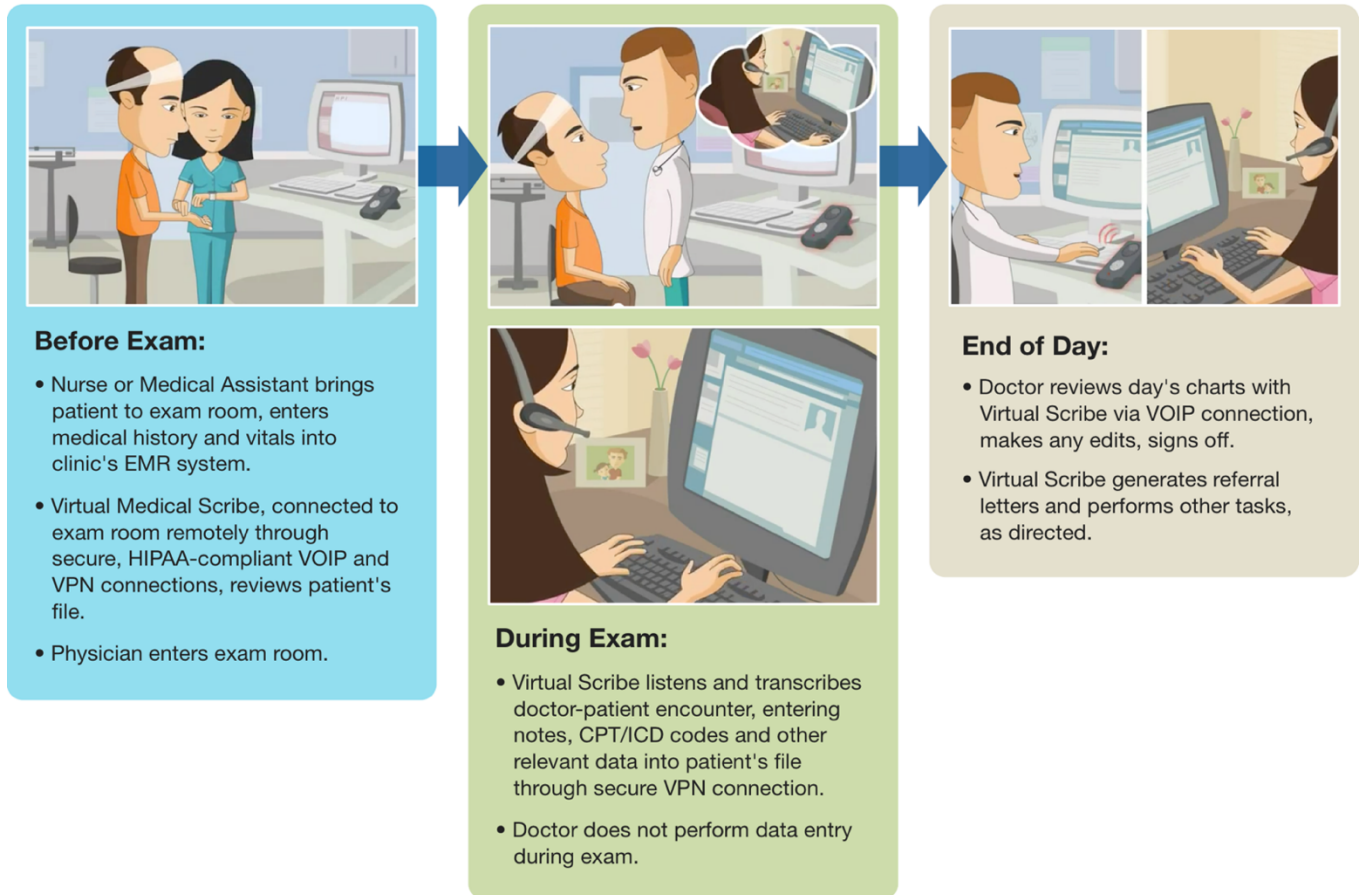
B. Average Financial Benefits of Using a Virtual Scribe:

	Per 8-hour clinic day	Per Week	Per Month	Per Year
Revenue of 4-5 additional patients with a Virtual Scribe	\$1,000	\$4,000	\$15,000	\$150,000
Cost of 1 Virtual Scribe @ \$15/hour	(\$150-\$250)	(\$400-\$600)	(\$1,500-\$2,000)	(\$25,000)
Net Revenue with a Virtual Scribe	+ \$750	+ \$3,400	+ \$13,000	+ \$125,000

The time-value proposition of using a Virtual Scribe is clear: Spend less time charting; use that time to see more patients; use the extra revenues you earn to cover the cost of having hired a Virtual Scribe; and use the extra free time to relax and spend time with family.

Clinics using Virtual Scribes report less stress within the office. Doctors rediscover dinner time with their family and enjoy weekends without charting. Medical Assistants can reconnect and spend more quality time with their patients.

The following illustration captures the best practice use of a Virtual Scribe:



With a Virtual Scribe, a doctor has a dedicated EMR data manager, working in real-time, to complete her charts same day. Her per-chart time spent in clinic drops significantly. As a result, the doctor can focus more on patient care – and her charts are completed same day. Doctors with Virtual Scribes do more work, but report being less fatigued.

How Do I Hire a Virtual Scribe for My Practice?

Step 1 – Identify Your Need

A Virtual Scribe service will cost your practice around \$15 per hour, or \$15,000 to \$25,000 per year, depending on a provider's patient volume and schedule. An average provider who sees 50-100 patients per week is a perfect candidate for a Virtual Scribe service.

Before hiring one, be sure that a Virtual Scribe is the answer to your EMR and charting woes. For example, ask yourself why your providers are not completing their charts in a timely manner? Are they working late hours and weekends to do so? If yes, then they are excellent candidates for a Virtual Scribe, as they are focused on completing charts and improving their workflow.

While a Virtual Scribe will cost you less than most support staff within your clinic, a Virtual Scribe is not “cheap.” Virtual Scribes are full-time employees who have gone through considerable training, certification courses, and mentorship to become proficient and expert at their work.

Step 2 – Study Best Practices for Virtual Scribes

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) and the Joint Commission have released best practice guidelines on working with Medical Scribes. AHIMA's guide is entitled “Using Medical Scribes in a Physician Practice,” and The Joint Commission's guide is a list of FAQs. You can find both on their respective websites.

These guidelines will help you think through the details of hiring a Virtual Scribe. Additionally, a growing number of hospitals and healthcare networks are approving policies on the hiring and employment of Medical Scribes. You can draw on all of this recently issued guidance to help develop your own set of best practices and policies in working with Virtual Scribes.

Step 3 – Weigh the Costs of Hiring & Managing a Medical Scribe Program Yourself

First, know what a Medical Scribe is not. A Medical Scribe is not a nurse, PA, or an MA doubling as a scribe when they have free time from providing patient care.

Just as you should not reduce a highly-paid doctor to having to do EMR work for hours every day, why would you ask the same of your patient care support staff? Like a physician, nurses and PAs should focus on patient care and procedures – i.e., revenue-generating activity – not typing.

If you decide to hire your own Medical Scribes in clinic, consider the following time costs and expenses: advertising the job; interviewing and vetting candidates; hiring and training the candidates to work as a Scribe; certifying the Scribe; and managing Scribe staffing turnover.

In other words, expect to spend the same time and efforts with a Medical Scribe as you would with hiring and on-boarding new clinic staff. Also, consider the financials expenses in hiring a Medical Scribe: payroll taxes, insurance, benefits, office space costs, an extra computer, and sick time.

The Virtual Scribe model takes most, if not all of these expenses off of your plate, as the Virtual Scribe vendor will assume those expenses and have built them already into the cost of their service offerings to you.

Step 4 – What to Look for in a Virtual Scribe Company

After having studied the steps listed above, contact Virtual Scribe companies in the marketplace. Be sure to ask them the following questions when doing your research:

- How long have you been providing Virtual Scribes? With how many healthcare groups do you work? With what specialties and EMRs do you work?
- What is the training, mentorship, and certification process of your Virtual Scribe staff?
- What do you do if a doctor's regular Virtual Scribe is suddenly ill or absent from work?
- What is the security of your Virtual Scribe office facility and IT systems?
- Ask if the company hires Medical Scribes to work from home. (Note this practice is not secure or HIPAA-compliant. Moreover, it is difficult to manage the reliability and work performance of an at-home Virtual Scribe.)
- Is the company's Virtual Scribe service truly real-time? Or is it simply old-fashioned, transcription services marketed as something else?

Summary

The time-value proposition of hiring a Virtual Scribe is clear: Spend less time charting; use that time to see more patients; use the extra revenues you earn to justify the cost of having hired a Virtual Scribe; and use the extra free time to relax and spend time with family.

Step 1 – Identify Your Need

Make sure your provider will be a good fit for a Virtual Scribe. Most, but not all physicians are good candidates for Medical Scribes. Also, ensure that your provider's schedule, patient volume, and workflow habits lend themselves well to a Virtual Scribe service.

Step 2 – Study Best Practices for Virtual Scribes

Look at guidelines from organizations such as AHIMA and the Joint Commission to help you move forward with a Virtual Scribe service.

Step 3 – Weigh the Costs of Hiring & Managing a Medical Scribe Program Yourself

Realize that running a Medical Scribe program yourself will not be cheap or easy. You should be aware of the time and costs associated with hiring and training Medical Scribes. A Virtual Scribe company can manage those costs and efforts for you.

Step 4 – What to Look for in a Virtual Scribe Company

Ask the Virtual Scribe company about its training and security practices. There are well-established Virtual Scribe companies in the market now, and with new ones emerging every year. Be well-prepared for your conversations with them. Also, be sure to clarify if the company's Virtual Scribe service is truly real-time.

In looking for EMR charting and data management solutions, you have a good number of options available to you. Virtual Scribes are one of them. Be sure to study well the steps listed above as you search for ways to improve your practice, enhance your staff's quality of life and delivery of patient care, and increase your economic bottom line.

PhysiciansAngels

About Physicians Angels, Inc.:

Physicians Angels is the world's first Virtual Scribe company, founded and developed by physicians and surgeons in practice in Michigan and Ohio. Our Virtual Scribes have served providers in all 50 U.S. states and several countries since 2007.

For further information please contact us at:

+1 (419) 318-4471

contactus@physiciansangels.com

or visit us online at:

www.physiciansangels.com

Our offices are located in:

Toledo, Ohio USA

Austin, Texas USA

Guindy, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Mahalingapuram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Shillong, Meghalaya, India

Copyright © Physicians Angels, Inc. 2018. All rights reserved.