

Written Communications

- A quick easy breakdown for MA students

Correspondence or written communication in the medical office can include sending notes, interoffice communications (IOCs), email, info recorded on the pt's chart, form letters, info sheets, and business, professional, and personal letters. In a physician's office, written communication is used:

- To inform the staff officially of a policy/decision
- To inform pts/customers of a policy/decision
- To contact professional colleagues
- To correspond w/ professional associates
- To respond to or request a medical consultation
- To engage in business communications w/ medical suppliers, financial consultations, attorneys, and insurance companies
- To send a message regarding a pt/ by written message, EHR, pt. Portal, or email
- To send personal messages

It cannot be overstated how important written communication skills are in the health care setting. FIRST, any documentation is part of the legal medical record. SECOND, your written communication skills reflect directly on your level of professionalism. In today's health care setting, most documentation is done in the electronic format: EHRs, email, instant messages, portals, etc. MOST IMPORTANTLY, accuracy. Errors could be disastrous for the pt, provider, and facility

IOC is an informal, memo-style communication that is usually specific to one concern. It's an effective way of being certain that everyone is aware of some event, policy, concern, and other internal communication

Providers might need to write to their professional associations, licensing boards, and other physicians regarding some issue or concern affecting personal medical activities or their professional practice

The greatest amount of correspondence, aside from documenting in a pts chart, is of the business type required to manage the affairs of the practice. This would include referrals, consultations, annual exam reminders, collection letters, school/work releases, suppliers of equipment and materials, and other correspondence necessary to the office operation. Form letters are especially well suited for:

- Return to work or school approvals
- Annual physical exam reminders
- Delinquent account reminders, usually in about 3 increasing levels of request intensity
- noncompliance , missed appts, and dismissal
- Office visit verifications
- Athletic participation approvals
- Information to referred pts such as appt confirmation, office location, information needed, and exam preparation

Prewritten form letters can be developed and stored electronically

Information sheets, also known as pt education, provide specific written instructions regarding the exams and diagnostic tests performed in your office. They help reinforce what you've explained and serve as a reminder after the pt leaves the office. They also typically explain to pts how to prepare themselves for a particular test or what to expect when the test is performed

Summary

- Types of written correspondence include: notes, IOC, email, info recorded in the pts chart, form letters, info sheets and pt education materials, and business, professional, and personal letters
- It cannot be overstated how important written communication skills are. Legal, accuracy, professionalism
- Form letters and templates are usually indicated to manage the affairs of the practice
- An info sheet (pt education) provides specific written instruction regarding the exam and diagnostic tests performed, and reminders