Electronic Body Management Form (e-BDF), A Patient Clinical Team Effort: A Two-Year Summary

Umer Sheikh, MD, MBBS, Detroit, MI; Ian Anderson, MD, Dana Trysh, BA, Basim Al-Khafaji, St. John Hospital & Medical Center, Detroit

An Electronic Body Management Form (e-BDF) was created in 2010 to deal with complex end-of-life issues. Our prior paper form supplemented by a Microsoft Access database tracking system had several drawbacks including incompleteness, erroneous forms, time delays, and lack of real-time updates. Our experience relates to autopsy requests, data entry, and clinician education. e-BDF was developed by our Information Technology Team with input from pathology and clinical entities. e-BDF is written in C# on the .NET 2.0 platform with data stored on a Microsoft® SQL server. The form is initiated by the nurse, and includes six tabs; patient information, legal next-of-kin (NoK), autopsy, Gift of Life (GoL), Medical Examiner (ME), and final checklist. Each tab offers step-by-step guidance with real time help. A physician request, NoK permission, and reason for autopsy are mandatory. Once the completed form is signed by nurse, physician, and NoK, the record is locked and archived. Each subsequent step including morgue delivery, autopsy completion, and security release is tracked. Hospital-wide training and annual recertification is implemented. Our autopsy rate has dropped from 64 in 2010 to 35 and 33, in 2011 and 2012 respectively. This decline is attributed to proper case evaluation for ME and valid indications for an autopsy request. We anticipate an increase in autopsy numbers as physicians are mandated to discuss the need for autopsy with families. Our nursing staff, annually surveyed, have endorsed e-BDF as it eliminates data duplication, multiple hand-offs, and redundant archiving, while providing real time information to expedite GoL, ME, and funeral home processing. Furthermore, the final checklist halts the process if information is missing, negating incomplete forms. The e-BDF also facilitates real-time guidance for clinicians. Meanwhile, our collaboration with nursing, GoL, ME, hospital security, and funeral homes has significantly improved patient service, safety, and security.

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