Computerised out-patient records in Sri Lankan hospitals

Dr. Denham Pole
Swiss Red Cross, Sri Lanka
E-mail address: drpole@gmail.com

Only the Abstract is available

Abstract

The need for better hospital records: The out-patient departments of Sri Lanka are amongst the busiest hospital departments in the world. The majority of patients who visit government hospitals are treated there. They are the prime source of healthcare for the population and the data collected would be invaluable for public health planning and intervention. If computers could replace the written paper, it would increase the speed of documentation and access to the previous clinical record. It would also allow collection of statistics on out-patients.
Constraints: But the doctors are so busy that they barely have time to write the clinical details. In most hospitals, space is so limited that it is difficult to find somewhere for a mouse on the table, much less a PC. With the high turnover of staff in government hospitals, experienced staff leave and a new batch arrive to find a mouse has replaced the pen on their desk. If computers can replace paper, they must be quicker and easier to use, and require a minimum of training. Data must be selected from lists - villages, presenting complaints or drugs prescribed. Patients must have a positive identification number that never changes. The database must be simple and easy to use. It must run at lightning speed even when 10 other doctors are hammering away at the system. The system must be reliable and low cost.
Achievements in Sri Lanka up to now: In a project funded by the Austrian/Swiss Red Cross, computerised medical record-keeping systems were installed in 27 hospitals in the Eastern Province. Medical staff in five of these hospitals are now entering out-patient data directly into the computer as they see the patient. In the others only admissions are being recorded. Rapid access to the previous record is the most impressive feature, and the computer is already starting to replace paper documentation.

Keywords - Computerised out-patient records, public health planning, replace paper