

# Less is More: Reducing pharmacist note-bloat in an electronic health record

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## Background

Note-bloat is an established cause of reduced documentation readability within electronic health records<sup>1-2</sup>. Unnecessarily duplicated content risks leaving key information buried or lost.

In outpatient settings, time spent reviewing and generating lengthy notes can reduce clinic throughput, with consequent activity and funding implications.

Outpatient pharmacist notes at our facility (Figure 1) were identified as a major source of note-bloat and utilisation of content by the broader multidisciplinary team was poor.

## Objectives

Conduct a multidisciplinary co-redesign of pharmacist notes within the renal outpatient clinic of a metropolitan teaching hospital to enhance content readability and utility.

Evaluate documentation redesign impact upon pharmacist practice.

## Action

Nephrologists within the clinic completed a qualitative survey to identify valuable content within pharmacist notes.

A new note template was then designed via application of Nephrologist feedback and note-bloat reduction strategies from the literature<sup>1-4</sup> (Figures 2 and 3).

The resultant co-redesign was assessed to ensure mandatory activity-based funding requirements were met then trialled within the clinic.

Nephrologist and pharmacist surveys were conducted four months post-implementation, and monthly reporting of pharmacist activity continued.

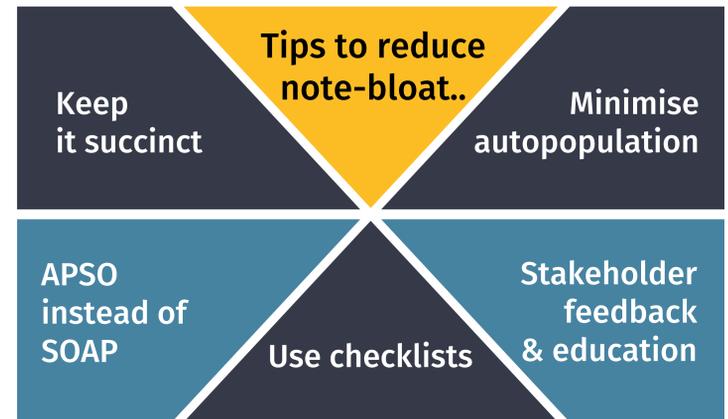


Figure 3: Summary of note-bloat reduction strategies from the literature

## Evaluation

Baseline Nephrologist feedback (n=5) revealed pharmacist notes were:

- Too busy and hard to read
- Cluttered with duplicated information
- Contained unusable medication lists

Following co-redesign, 100% of Nephrologist's (n=5) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" pharmacist notes were:

- Easier to read
- Free from duplicated content
- Contained medication lists useful for review and inclusion in clinic letters

Pharmacist feedback advocated continued use of the new format, while a 44% increase in renal pharmacist outpatient activity was observed and maintained over the four-month trial period (Figure 4):

- Equating to ~26 additional patients/month seen
- Extrapolating to an extra \$73,728 p.a. of revenue



Figure 1: Example of original pharmacist note

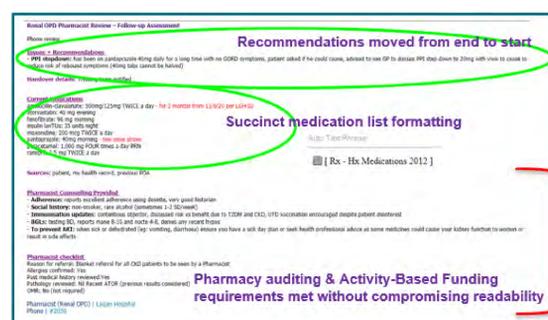


Figure 2: Example of co-redesigned pharmacist note



Figure 4: Number of patients seen by renal outpatient pharmacist

**“It has significantly contributed to an improved multidisciplinary culture for pharmacy within the renal service”<sup>5</sup>**

## Discussion

Improving pharmacist note quality has the potential to increase multidisciplinary satisfaction, increase clinic throughput and promote greater safety in medication management. Work continues to build succinct medication list options suitable for use in outpatient settings.

## References

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