

# Modern Methods of Preservation and Conservation of Mutilated Health Records

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## INTRODUCTION

Medical records are the document that explains all detail about the patient's history, clinical findings, diagnostic test results, pre and post-operative care, patient's progress and medication. If written correctly, notes will support the doctor about the correctness of treatment. Preservation of medical histories record is very crucial to patients' healthcare quality since when preservation is not being discharged properly; medical histories records are either inaccessible or difficult to access, which has a detrimental effect on the healthcare services provided to patients. This study is on the Modern Methods of Preservation and Conservation of Mutilated Health Records. Most hospital preserve patient health records, However, most of these records both print and non-print were affected by dust and particulate matters, high temperature, air pollution, bad storage, overcrowdings, wear and tear due to excessive filing and retrieval, oxidation and excessive light. Measures were taken to curtail the mutilation, but this was not enough as some of the health records continue to deteriorate. Many hospital give little room for records preservation. The preservation and conservation activities in hospitals are not fully and appropriately carried out. In view of this a number of recommendations were made, some of which are: the use of air conditioning for 24 hours in the health records library and storage rooms and to ensure regular and frequent repairs, cleaning and dusting of the environments, Hospitals should fully engage in electronic preservation in order to meet up with the required standard of service in the 21st century and they should also exploit other sources of funding through advocacy, solicitation, endowment, consultancy, organizing seminars and workshops etc.

Preservation of Patient health records is an often overlooked and underrated activity at many Hospitals. While a strong, well-thought out records preservation plan can make hospital efficient and effective, neglect of preservation activities can lead to mutilation of important patient health record and loss of information. Poor health records management can cripple a hospital, halting efficiency, sucking up precious time, and causing unnecessary stress for employees. Hospitals with poor preservation plan oftentimes waste excessive amounts of time sorting through messy filing

cabinets, waste valuable office spaces to store paperwork, forcing the hospital to pay premium prices for document storage, vital health record are misplaced, buried, and lost, communication between coworkers erodes, and employee stress levels rise as their ability to find and share information becomes unnecessarily challenging. Preservation of medical information is one of the most crucial factors that can help develop the medical sector which is responsible for saving lives. Records preservation activities include storage, retrieval, maintenance, careful use and disposal or weeding of medical information.

According to Ondieki, health workers in the public health institutions, such as medical doctors and nurses, are usually not able or are struggling to render timely and effective health services to citizens due to a lack of effective records management systems. Poor Medical record preservation is often the case in resource-limited settings, which threatens the quality of health care. Ineffective records management systems usually lead to long patient waiting times before patients receive health service. Result obtained from a recent study indicate that in healthcare institutions where records are not properly preserved, the health workers end up not rendering certain services because the health history of the patient is not contained in medical files. This is due to the fact that, if health workers proceed to treat patients without enough information about the patients' health background, he/she may end up rendering poor health service that might be risky to Patient's health. Besides many health challenges persist because of lack of medical information. Even Bali reported that the management and preservation of the hospital records in Indian context present a very gloomy picture. Despite the intensive effort at national and international level, the fundamental health care needs of the population of the developing countries are still unmet. The lack of basic health data renders difficulties in formulating and applying a rational for the allocation of limited resources that are available for patient care and disease prevention. Many large medical facilities spend a lot of time searching for patient's records and sometimes some records were never found again.

Non availability of potentially life-saving health information is a significant risk that damaged or lost medical records could present.

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Received: November 02, 2021; Accepted: November 15, 2021; Published: November 22, 2021

Citation: Adetunji YP (2021) Modern Methods of Preservation and Conservation of Mutilated Health Records. J Pat Care 7:172. doi: 10.35248/2573-4598.21.7.172.

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A lack of management with regard to preservation of medical information can also pose a legal threat. The onus of preservation generally, is concerned with keeping something the same way it is or preventing it from being damaged. In library and information profession, it implies the protection of information bearing materials through activities that bring to the barest minimum mutilation agents (such as biological, environmental, chemical and physical), thereby prolonging their existence. Preservation involves routine maintenance activities such as proper handling of records to prevent environmental hazards or physical damages, the use of physical and chemical treatments which will not adversely affect the integrity of the original records in order to resist further mutilation, and the repair of already damaged records to ensure that their contents are not lost.

According to Alayeh, methods of preserving medical records include cleaning of records, careful handling, use of effective storage media, photocopying, using air filter systems to control air pollution, sun shield, use of energy saving light, air-conditioners for controlling temperature and relative humidity, using papers with low acidity, fumigation against insects and rodents attack, fire

extinguishers and sand buckets, microfilming of records, ensuring adequate security of records to prevent unauthorized access to records. Medical records are very important documents in patient management. They explain the details about each patient's history, clinical findings, diagnostic test results, pre and postoperative care, patient's progress and medical history and care over a period of time within one health care institution. Medical information comprises of a variety of notes entered over time by health care professionals, recording observations and administration of drugs and therapies, test results, x-rays, reports, mediations and medical allergies, immunization records, surgical history, etc. Keeping accurate medical record is a vital tool for the delivery of quality healthcare. As such, preservation of medical information is a core practice in clinical environment. The goal of preservation is to ensure that important information is retained over a period of time. Irrespective of the format of medical information (i.e. electronic or paper), good record keeping enables continuity of care and enhances communication between different healthcare professionals.