7 Steps To Effective Medical Records Analysis

Have you ever left out a relevant data from the medical records that could have potentially impacted the outcome of your cases? No worries, you are not alone. Whether you are analyzing an oncology case, a surgical case, a cardiology case or any medical-related cases for that matter, knowing how to effectively analyze and interpret medical records can help you save time, reduce costs and promote faster settlements. With this report, you will have a better understanding of the analysis and the interpretation process that relate to medical records, and where the role of a legal nurse consultant fits in that process.

Step One: Understanding the Allegation (s)
Create a case theme that will keep you focus on the most important issue of the case. This step will also help you to better comprehend the plaintiff’s complaints regarding the injuries and how they occurred. With the collaboration of a legal nurse consultant, as you gather the plaintiff’s complete medical history and comorbidities you will evaluate what possible cause-effect relationship exists regarding the incident.

Step Two: Assembling a Complete Set of Medical Records
A complete set of medical records will be needed to produce an effective outcome. If you don’t, you may run into surprises which can be costly and can cause unnecessary delays. Furthermore, some documents may not be considered as part of the official medical records. There are as follows: fetal heart monitor trips/monitoring strips in the ICU, radiographic films, logs, videotapes or photographic documentation of surgical procedures, billing records, accident or work site reports, Reference laboratories, records from a previous treating facility. You may need a legal nurse consultant to ensure you had requested all the necessary records and all of them have been released. Some other documents you may want to review as they can help you fill in the blanks and draw a conclusion.

- Policies and procedures
- Past Medical History and pre-existing medical conditions
- Billing records: to detect facts that don’t show up in the medical records
- Legal File
Sources of Standard of care (legal, Regulatory agencies and professional associations)

Patient's Diary

**Step Three: Organization of the Medical records**

You should organize and label the medical records into a logical order for ease of review. You may want to label the medical records that are not critical to the case so that the information can be easily retrieved if needed. During this process you should perform a quick assessment to identify who treated the plaintiff when and where. For complicated cases, make an outline or chronology of all important events.

**Step Four: Finding Evidence of Tampering**

At the screening phase, it is always best to have your clients request their own medical records so that you don’t raise a red flag to the Healthcare institution. Later on, you can compare the set of records you requested with your clients’ as you may identify some evidences of tampering. A legal nurse consultant can be a great resource to you in finding out entries that can be considered as evidence of tampering.

**Step Five: Medical Research**

Your legal nurse consultant can conduct medical research of all major topics and obtain authoritative textbooks and articles to support your position. The medical literature review will clarify natural history and pathogenesis of a disease or help you outline information necessary to prove causation.

**Step Six: Summary of Case and Timeline of important events**

For easy reference, summarize the facts that you find in the medical records in a narrative format and create a timeline of important events.

**Step Seven: Conducting a Thorough Analysis**

At this point, you will conduct an in-depth assessment of the medical or nursing judgment and whether or not the professionals involved complied with the standard of care. You may want to compare your clients’ diary and allegations with the medical records to determine consistencies and/or discrepancies from the medical records.
A) Assess for Duty and Negligence

You will identify who had a duty to care for the plaintiff and determine whether or not they are the potential defendants. You don’t want to leave a key player which may create unnecessary delays, and compromise the outcome of your cases. Also, you should check for contributory negligence as you might find documentation that the plaintiff may have been noncompliant to the treatment regimen.

B) Summarize Deviations from Standard of Care

Assess for deviations that might possibly have committed by all parties.

- Negligent Plaintiff
- Hospital (budgetary issues can impact patient outcome)
- Physicians
- Nurses
- Corporate Owner
- Other Healthcare Providers (Respiratory Therapist; Physical Therapist etc.)

C) Injuries and Damages:

- Physical
- Psychological injury
- Was patient fully recovered?

D) Assess for Causation

- Did the negligence cause the alleged injuries?

E) Causation defenses

- Formulate possible arguments that the defendants might present in response to the allegation(s)

F) Identify Problems with the case from both sides

Plaintiff

- (liability, plaintiff is fully recovered, limit on the damages)
- What could confuse the injury?
- Missing documents
- Nurses words against the plaintiff and or family members
Defense:
- Ignoring the plaintiff’s complaints
- Inadequate staffing

G) Identify Potential Expert witnesses:
- Based on the allegation(s) of the case and the information retrieved from the medical records, you will need reliable expert witnesses to support your position. For budgetary reasons, you may list them in order of importance.

*Fidelity Legal Nurse Consulting* can help you promote faster settlements for your clients, have the peace of mind that you deserve, stay within your budget, and save you extra time to spend with families and friends. A bad result may not necessarily mean a deviation had occurred. With that said, it is essential you have a legal nurse in your legal team to weed out non-meritorious cases and promote favorable outcomes. **CLICK HERE** to **LOCK** yourself in at a **REDUCED** hourly **RATE** before it goes up by **JULY 1st**. This offer is limited to 5 attorneys!

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**Betty Merveil-Ceneus** is the owner of *Fidelity Legal Nursing Consulting*. A consulting firm that specializes in helping medical malpractice lawyers to bring some sort of closure to those who had been injured. Betty started her consulting business right after her dear friend lost a baby due to a gross medical malpractice. Since then, she has become passionate in helping attorneys analyze and interpret medical records and develop strategic plans to promote faster settlements for their clients.

Betty started her nursing career as a Certified Nurse Assistant. She gracefully climbed the ladder of success to become a Registered Nurse, an Advance Practice Nurse, and a Legal Nurse Consultant. With over 15 years in the healthcare field, Betty has managed the clinical care of patients with acute and chronic medical conditions in multiple clinical settings such as medical-surgical, intensive care, cardiology/telemetry, geriatric, research, long-term care, and more.

Betty holds her Master of Science in Nursing from The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers in Newark, New Jersey; and her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from The New Rochelle College in New Rochelle, New York, where she graduated on the Dean’s List.