

# THE ROLE OF MEDICAL SOCIAL WORKER IN THE MEDICAL RECORD DEPARTMENT

V. Ramachandiran

## Medical Record Department—What is it?

Almost every hospital or clinic is maintaining a medical record section for proper custody of patients' records viz., IN-PATIENT RECORDS—nurses graphical (pulse and temp.) records and Doctor's instructions chits and OUT-PATIENT CARDS, yet it is not an adequate and comprehensive medical record section. The modern scientific medical record department is comparatively a new creation especially to India and to other developing countries, but, it is in vogue since many decades in countries like U.K., U.S.A., Canada, New Zealand and Australia. The Department of Medical Records is the ultimate creation of Medical Record Science of Hospital Administration, personnel Administration, Medical Record practice (Collection of Census, Assembling and Deficiency check, discharge analysis, coding and indexing and incomplete and complete record process), Anatomy and physiology, Medical Terminology, Coding and Indexing as per International classification of disease of W.H.O. and health statistics. Before, 1950's there was no scientific medical record department in India. The W.H.O. and the Medical Council of India have been insisting to have scientific medical record departments, atleast in teaching Institutes. It is in 1962, in the Christian Medical College Hospital, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, the Government of India had authorized first, to start and impart the medical record science course (6 months for Medical Record Technician's and one year Medical Record Officer's Course) with a view to establish the medical record departments in all the teaching institutions as well as in hospitals having large number of beds. To-day, in India, quite a number of hospitals are maintaining good scientific medical record department, but, the only Institutes namely the Christian Medical College Hospital, Vellore and the Jawaharlal Institute of post-Graduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER) Hospital, Pondicherry are maintaining a complete and comprehensive medical record system of inpatient, outpatient with unit numbering system, admission office with bradma addressograph and imprinters, follow up system, International size of forms, clock room service while the other hospitals/institutes are maintaining only general inpatient record system. The medical records department is following the complete outpatient case sheet system with unit num-

bering system with patient alpha index card maintenance and coding and indexing system (as per WHO classification) consists of staff members of Medical Records Officer, Medical Records Assistant, Medical Social Worker, Statistician, Medical Record Supervisors, Medical Records Technicians, Computers, Record Clerks, Receptionist-cum-Telephone Operators, Clock room attendant, L.D.C., Store Keeper, Record sorter, Peon and Sweepers. As such, the Medical Record Department may perhaps be defined as "that part of the hospital responsible for the proper custody of medical records of the patients, for making such audits and reports as may be necessary to demonstrate the quality and quantity of work done and for assisting in the advancement of medical science through accurately recorded data".

## Role of Medical Social Worker

In the medical records department, although, the Medical Record Officer is the head of the department, the Medical Social Workers (MSWs) play a prominent role in the outpatient ward. John B. Murphy, M.D. 1857-1916 says "the patient is the centre of the medical universe around which all our works revolve and towards which all our efforts tend". The Medical Social Workers have to keep watching at the entrance of the hospital (with special uniform for easy identification by patients) so that their services may be utilised. The primary function of the MSW is to render direct service to the patients by practising social case work. Here it should be remembered that the task of the Medical Social Worker is "to cure and to strive for social betterment of patients." The most important duty of MSW in the outpatient ward is to help the disabled patients or to guide them to the required places for the laboratory tests, radiological examination, pharmacy, injection room, E.C.G., laboratory, admission office or to other referral services of out-patient department is very important, as the doctors are very busy in their clinical assessment.

It is also under the purview of the MSW to issue the railway concession certificate (appendix IV, under rule No. 401, SI. No. 15) to the cancer patients and even to help them financially so that they may reach their destination. Financial help to the poor patients from the "Hospital poor patient's Fund" is also dealt with by the MSW. The main focus of the MSW should be on the illness of patients and their treatment, rehabilitation and prevention. It is also the responsibility

Mr. V. Ramachandiran was a Medical Social Worker at Jawaharlal Institute of Post-Graduate Medical Education and Research Hospital, Pondicherry-605006.

of the MSW to fix O.P.D. guidelines with proper picture and hanging O.P.D. number boards for proper identification of the place by patients, displaying vaccination, BCG, immunization charts, family welfare chart, well baby chart, diet chart worm infestation chart, T.B., leprosy and other social diseases and preventive step charts. Follow up system should also be undertaken by the MSW for utilizing the complete and proper medical facilities and getting the patients cured of their ailments.

Maintenance of patients mobile library and its proper function (in the afternoon) is also one of the important responsibilities of the MSW. Daily service has to be made for issue and collection of books to patients in the wards. In addition to this, relay of musical records in the evening is yet another responsibility of MSW.

Further, attending special clinics of surgery in the afternoon viz., cancer surgery, cardiac thoracic surgery, pediatric surgery, urology and plastic surgery is also the duty of the MSW (as the medical Record Department Social worker is attached with the surgery department). The MSW also helps with diagnostic procedures, treatment, rehabilitation and prevention of the diseases.

It is also the duty of the MSW to act as a link (liaison) between the doctors and patients, between administrators and patients and with all welfare agencies like Lions club, Rotary club and other philanthropic institutions and patients for providing material help to them by way of purchasing life saving drugs which are not available in the hospital pharmacy, by making necessary arrangements for blood donation to patients in case it is not available in the hospital blood bank and further by providing orthopaedic appliances, spectacles, etc., to those who cannot afford to buy them. The MSW is also responsible for the articles made by the disabled and which were handed over by the occupational therapy unit for sales as well as keeping proper account and further participating and encouraging them in the Disabled Day's celebration so as to prove that the "disabled does not mean unabled".

#### **The qualities of Medical Social Worker**

The MSW of the Medical Records Department should be well versed in the fundamentals of medical record science and the procedure and functions of the medical record department because it will go a long way to avoid delay. He/she can carry out registration work of opening a case sheet in the shortest time possible, trace the missing cards of patients from the 'Patient alpha index' permanent cabinet; 'in the hospital' and 'gone home' cabinet and from the coding and indexing cards of WHO classification and the follow up system. It is advisable that the MSW who are working in the medical record department should undergo some orientation course

in medical record keeping. The MSW should have pleasing personality with good physical trait and should be tactful and diplomatic. The MSW should be alert to devise new ways and means of improving the work and he/she should possess the qualities of diligence, persistence, progressiveness, and decisiveness to face the new challenges. He/she should also be co-operative between the patients and visitors and between the medical and paramedical staff. The MSW should above all be courteous and sympathetic to the patients. He should also preserve the confidential nature of professional decisions made by the staff committee which he serves.

The MSW should also maintain diary, register and index card system which will pave way for easy remembrance, follow up study and for undertaking research work, as the record diary and register would serve him/her as data. Here, we should also remember the point that "man may forget but record will remember".

#### **Conclusion**

Eventhough, the MSW is posted to work in the Medical Records Department, his services are manifold and multifarious. The MSW is thus playing an important role for the promotion of the welfare of the patients.

---

## **NATIONAL AWARDS TO NURSING PERSONNEL FOR THE YEAR 1980**

The Director General of Health Services, New Delhi issued a circular letter in May, 1980 to all Directorates of Health Services of State Governments/Union Territories to call applications for the National Awards for the year 1980 and recommend names of suitable candidates by August 14, 1980.

It is hereby notified for the information of the members that the last date for receipt of applications in respect of the candidates sponsored for the National Awards has been extended upto the end of October, 1980. The nursing personnel employed in Central, States/Union Territories, Government hospitals and Institutions as well as employed in Voluntary Organisations may send their applications to the Superintendent Nursing Services/Asstt Director of Health Services (N) of their own State/Union Territory through proper channel immediately for screening at State level and forwarding the names of suitable candidates to the Central Selection Committee by the due date.

---

THE NURSING JOURNAL OF INDIA