

The Unavailability of Prenatal Records at Hospital Presentation

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Objectives

- To determine the unavailability of prenatal records at the time of patient presentation to a community hospital's labor and delivery unit.
- To document the age of the information in those prenatal records that are available.
- To investigate the efforts made to retrieve missing records.

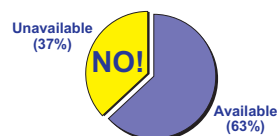
Method

A survey form was completed by labor and delivery nursing staff over a three-month period for each patient presenting for care.

Results

- Prenatal records were unavailable 37% of the time when patients presented to L&D (n = 536).
- Prenatal records were *never* obtained for 20% of the patients before they delivered or were sent home undelivered.
- The median age of the prenatal record as determined by the patient's last recorded visit in the chart was 30 ± 31 days (range 0 - 207) for those records that were available at the time of presentation, (n = 273), and the median age was 5 ± 19 days (range 0 - 127) for those records that were retrieved after the patient presented (n = 67).

Was the prenatal record available when the patient presented?

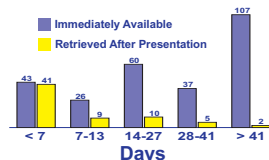


Was the prenatal record ever made available to clinicians during care?

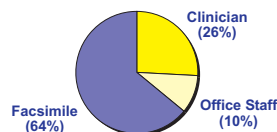


How old were the prenatal records when they were available?

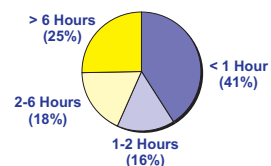
Of those prenatal records that were immediately available, for 39% of those records, the information in them was over six weeks old.



How were missing prenatal records retrieved?



How long did it take to retrieve missing prenatal records?



Results (cont.)

- When the prenatal record was not immediately available and was subsequently retrieved (n = 83), it took a median of 1.4 ± 12.1 hours (range 0.25 - 80 hours) to obtain the record.
- For those prenatal records that were retrieved (n = 89), 9 (10%) were delivered by office staff, 23 (26%) were retrieved personally by clinicians, and 57 (64%) of the records were obtained by facsimile.

Conclusions

- Prenatal records are frequently unavailable when a patient presents for care at a community hospital.
- Even when prenatal records are available, the information contained within them is likely to be outdated.
- Missing and outdated prenatal records may create significant risk for the patient.
- Better methods of maintaining accessible prenatal records are needed.