Listening

A patient record form

1 Listen to the nurse get personal details from a patient. As you listen, complete the form.

PATIENT RECORD

Surname .....

First name .....

Gender M F

DOB .....

Place of birth .....

Occupation .....

Marital status .....

Next of kin .....

Contact no. .....

Smoking intake .....

Alcohol intake .....

Reason for admission .....

Family history

☐ mental illness ☐ turberculosis

☐ diabetes ☐ HIV/AIDS

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2 Listen again and complete these questions that the nurse asks.

1 What _____ you?

2 _____ date of birth?

3 _____ you born?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Reading

Bad handwriting

1 What do people say about your handwriting? Is it clear and easy to read?

2 As fast as you can, write down three types of medicine and three diseases. Show it to your partner. Can they read what you have written? Have you made any mistakes?

3 Read the article and decide if these sentences are true (T) or false (F).

1 Nurses study doctors' handwriting at school. _____
2 Doctors generally write numbers more carefully than words. _____
3 Methimazole and Metolazone are used for different conditions. _____
4 Ramachandra Kolluru is a pharmacist. _____
5 Researchers could understand 84% of doctors' notes. _____
6 Many hospitals use abbreviations in order to avoid mistakes. _____
7 At Charing Cross Hospital, staff carry computers around. _____

4 Find words in the article to match these definitions.

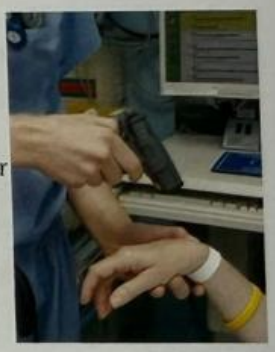
1 non-medical people who work in hospital offices _____
2 written instructions on what drug to give a patient _____
3 made somebody pay money as a punishment _____
4 to cut off part of the body _____
5 an arm or leg _____
6 mistakes that result in death _____

LIVEWORKSHEETS

There is an old joke that doctors go to school to learn how to write badly, and nurses go to school to learn how to read doctors' handwriting. There is truth in the joke – computer analysis of the handwriting of medical staff shows that doctors' writing is a lot worse than that of nurses and administrative staff. Maybe it's because doctors are always under pressure of time that they write very fast. The habit starts when they are medical students and gets worse as time passes.

Computer analysis shows that generally, medical staff are careful with numbers. However, they tend to form letters of the alphabet badly. When drug names look very similar, bad handwriting can mean patients get the wrong medicine. A young girl nearly died when she was given Methimazole instead of Metolazone (one is for high blood pressure and the other is for thyroid problems). And in 1999, an American cardiologist, Ramachandra Kolluru, wrote a prescription so badly that the pharmacist gave a patient the wrong medicine. This time the patient did die and a court fined the doctor 225,000 US dollars.

Recently, researchers studied 50 patient progress notes. They found that they could not read 16% of the words. The misunderstandings that this causes can mean that a patient is given the wrong blood, or that a surgeon amputates the wrong limb. Fatal errors, of course, make news, but studies show that every year hundreds of thousands of mistakes are made in hospitals around the world, and a lot of them are because of bad handwriting or abbreviations which nobody understands. Bad handwriting also causes delays, which are expensive and wasteful.



There are many technological solutions for the problem, and though digital technology can't improve handwriting, it can improve the situation. At London's Charing Cross Hospital, for example, patients wear bar codes (the same as in a supermarket) on their wrists or ankles. Staff use the bar codes along with hand-held computers to get accurate, clear, and easy-to-read information.

LIVEWORKSHEETS