

ASCRS 2014

*Use of Abbreviations in  
Ophthalmic Medical Record*

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The author has no financial interests to disclose.

# Abbreviations in Ophthalmology Notes

## Introduction

- Communication between different medical specialties is vital for effective patient care<sup>1</sup>
- PCPs are “directors” of outpatient care<sup>2</sup>
- Poor communication from specialists makes directing care tough<sup>3,4</sup>
- Ophthalmology uses many field-specific abbreviations in clinical notes<sup>4</sup>
- PCPs say these abbreviations are hard to understand<sup>4</sup>

# Abbreviations in Ophthalmology Notes

## Methods

- Reviewed 500 UT-Southwestern faculty eye clinic notes
- All faculty members' notes included in review
- All abbreviations without an explanation were flagged
- Compiled list of abbreviations used to develop a survey
- Survey sent to 40 of the 42 PCPs in the UTSW system
- Survey asked basic demographic questions and had list of 19 abbreviations



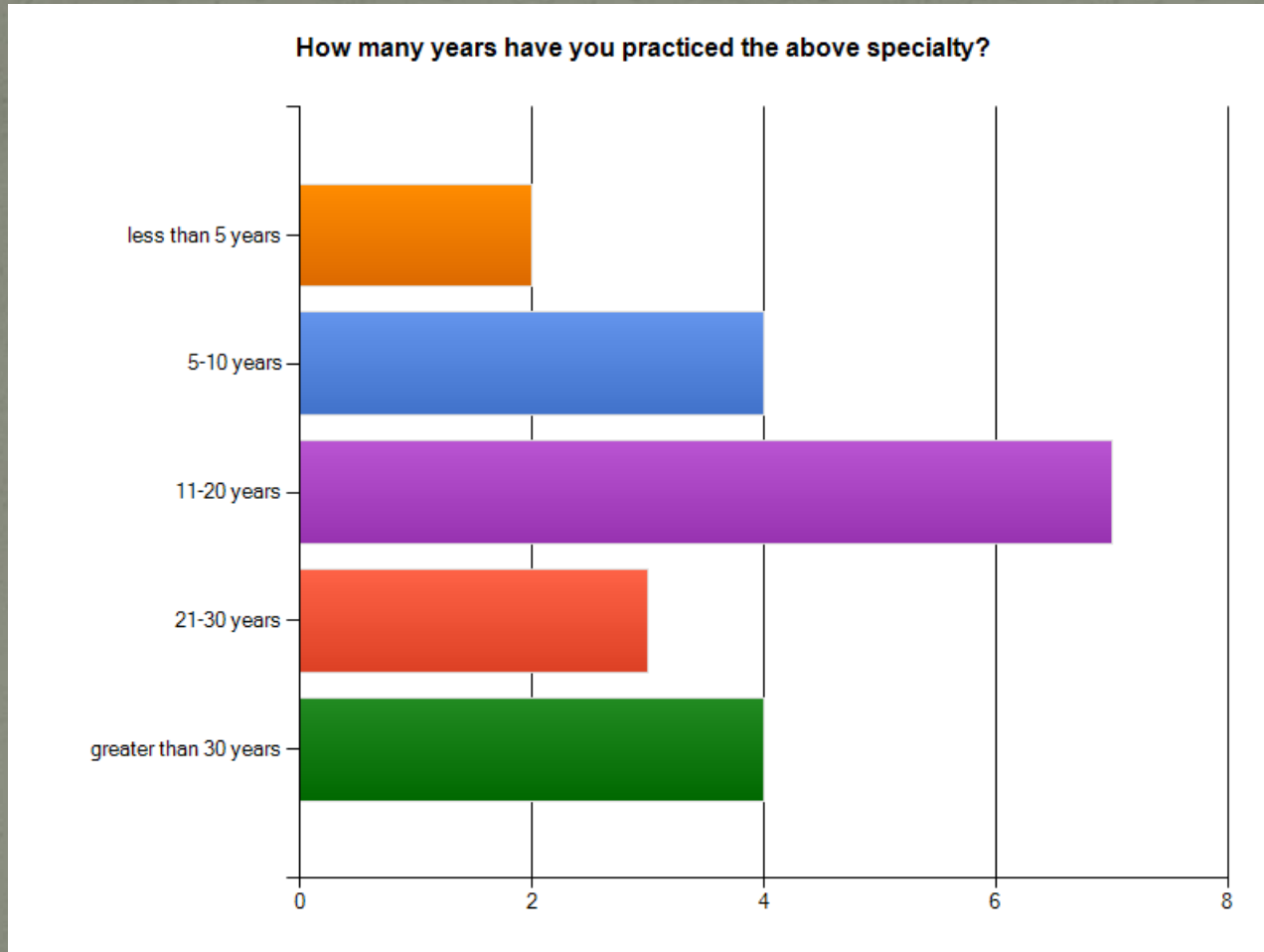
# Abbreviations in Ophthalmology Notes

## Results

- 89 different abbreviations found
- 90.4% of notes contained an abbreviation in the assessment and/or plan
- 19 of the abbreviations found were present in at least 5% of the reviewed notes
- 20 of 40 PCPs responded to emailed survey
- 16 PCPs from internal medicine, 1 from family medicine, 2 from pediatrics, 1 from med/peds

# Abbreviations in Ophthalmology Notes

## Results



# Abbreviations in Ophthalmology Notes

## Results

- Have you ever looked at an ophthalmology note in the medical record? **19 of 20 PCPs said yes**
- Have you looked at such a note in the past 12 months? **16 said yes**, 3 said no, 1 not sure
- **All 19 who had looked at eye notes had trouble understanding the assessment/plan** at least once
- **11 of 20 felt that patient care had been affected**
- How patient care affected: **“cannot effectively coordinate care”** & **“cannot discuss diagnosis/prognosis with patient”**



# Abbreviations in Ophthalmology Notes

## Results

### Abbreviations found (# of PCPs who understood)

- OD (18)
- OS (18)
- OU (13)
- ATs (0)
- AMD (4)
- ARMD (8)
- CE (2)
- IOP (15)
- VA (7)

# Abbreviations in Ophthalmology Notes

## Results

### Abbreviations found (# of PCPs who understood)

- IOL (4)
- RLL (2)
- OCT (1)
- Phaco (5)
- PPV (0)
- POAG (8)
- PF (0)
- PVD (2)
- SRF (0)



# Abbreviations in Ophthalmology Notes

## Discussion/Conclusions

- Almost all eye notes contain abbreviations
- Most abbreviations not understood by most PCPs
- This could potentially affect patient care
- Each eye MD has his/her own “set” of abbreviations
- Our EMR allows for “Smartphrases”, so each eye MD could have his/her “set” made into a Smartphrase
- PCPs in this study recommended that no abbreviations be used in assessment/plan or a key be given

# References

- <sup>1</sup>Letter Report. *Key Capabilities of an Electronic Health Record System: Letter Report*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2003.
- <sup>2</sup>Rosenthal TC. The medical home: growing evidence to support a new approach to primary care. *J Am Board Fam Med*. 2008 Sep-Oct;21(5):427-40.
- <sup>3</sup>Parvaiz MA, Subramanian A, Kendall NS. The use of abbreviations in medical records in a multidisciplinary world--an imminent disaster. *Commun Med*. 2008;5(1):25-33.
- <sup>4</sup>Holley CD, Lee PP. Primary care provider views of the current referral-to-eye-care process: focus group results. *Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci*. 2010 Apr;51(4):1866-72.
- <sup>5</sup>Sheppard JE, Weidner LCE, Zakai S, Fountain-Polley S, Williams J. Ambiguous abbreviations: an audit of abbreviations in paediatric note keeping. *Arch Dis Child*. 2008;93:204-206.