The ER Scribe Program
at Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center
(by Roger Hopper, Head Scribe for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years)

What is the scribe program?

The scribe program is a unique program that allows pre-medical students to gain an intimate and valuable first-hand experience within the field of emergency medicine while providing assistance to Emergency Room physicians by documenting medical records for the physician during the course of each patient’s ER visit. This allows the ER physicians to work more quickly and efficiently and to provide better care to the patients while allowing the scribe to have a first-hand look into the medical field. Scribes see everything the doctor sees, giving them invaluable perspective into the medical field and preparing them for their desired career in medicine.

What does a scribe do?

A scribe works alongside an ER physician or physician assistant during their shift and is responsible for the documentation of each patient’s chart, ensuring that the chart is accurate, up to date, and complete. A scribe will document the patient’s history, the physical exam findings, and any other documentation relating to the medical decision-making process, including radiology results, electrocardiogram interpretations, consults with other physicians, and the diagnosis and treatment plan.

The scribe is an integral part of the patient care team, facilitating communication between the ER physicians and the rest of the ER staff. As a scribe, you are called upon to accompany the physician on almost all patient encounters, document and transcribe all patient information onto the medical record, and assist in the patient flow process.

What is the time commitment?

Because of the extensive training process, scribes are expected to commit to the program for at least one year. Scribes may work full time or part time, as long as they are working at least 2 shifts a week. Shifts run during the following time periods: 7am-3pm, 9am-5pm, 1pm-6pm, 3pm-11pm, 5pm-1am, 6pm-11pm, and 11pm-7am. The 1pm-6pm and 6pm-11pm shifts are sometimes combined into one 12pm-11pm shift.

The ER is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so scribes are expected to make themselves available for as many shifts as possible to ease the process of scheduling. Obviously, many college students have class or need to be sleeping during some of these shifts, and most college students can’t be expected to work 40-hour weeks. Full-time scribes work many of the day and night shifts during the week while part-time student scribes work many of the evening and weekend shifts. Scribes are also required to work during holidays and breaks. Holiday shifts are divided as fairly as possible. Of course, scribes are able to go home for some holidays as well as take vacations when desired.
What are the requirements?

Scribes are William and Mary undergraduates (sophomore and above) and recent graduates who are interested in the medical profession. Students who are undergraduates at or graduates from other schools are considered and many have been hired, but William and Mary students are favored.

How do I become a scribe?

To apply, download an application from Professor Beverly Sher’s page at http://wmpeople.wm.edu/site/page/btsher/handouts. Complete the application and bring it to the Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center Emergency Room, fax it to 757-984-7156, or mail it to:

Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center
Emergency Department
Attn: Scribe Program
100 Sentara Circle
Williamsburg, VA 23188

When should I apply?

The program accepts applications at any time. We will put all applications on file and when we hire, all applications on file since the last hiring are reviewed and interviewees are selected from these applications.

What kind of background experience should I have?

While no background experience is required, there are many background experiences that make applicants to the scribe program more competitive. Any EMT, volunteering, or other job experience is looked on favorably during hiring and will probably give you skills and experience that will make you a better scribe.

When will the program be hiring?

The program usually hires in May when many scribes that are seniors graduate and leave the program. The program also often hires in August to ensure there will be sufficient shift coverage for the upcoming school year. Generally, the program hires whenever it needs more scribes, which could be at any time. Email the head scribes at williamsburg.scribes@gmail.com at any time for approximate information on when hiring will occur.

How many scribes are there?

At any given time, there are approximately 15 to 20 scribes. The program tries to keep a good balance so scribes are working on a consistent basis but aren’t overwhelmed with work.
Is the position paid?

Yes. Scribes make $7.50 per hour during training and get a raise to $9.00 per hour when they’re released from training to scribe on their own. Scribes are paid an additional $1.25 per hour to work the 10pm-7am night shift. Scribes that stay beyond the one-year minimum receive a $1.00 per hour bonus. Scribes that excel are selected to train scribes-in-training and receive a $1.00 per hour bonus while training.

Do I need a car?

Yes. Due to the nature of the job, including call-ins and odd hours, having a car is non-negotiable.

What is training for the position like?

Scribes undergo an eight-to-ten-week training process during which they familiarize themselves with medical terminology used for documentation, procedures and patient care activities, and the complex workings of the Emergency Department. Scribes go through a brief online training module and have scribe manuals as an important reference, but the majority of their training is done with other scribes that are on the job.

Training starts with trainees observing scribes while they work. Trainees soon begin taking down patients’ histories, learning to use medical terminology and abbreviations while writing a quality history. During the final stage of training, trainees do most of the charting and other scribe duties while trainer scribes observe to make sure things are running smoothly.

Is a criminal background check required?

Yes, a criminal background check is required by Sentara.

Further Questions? Please contact us at williamsburg.scribes@gmail.com