

TRANSCRIBE TRUE

Guide for Choosing a Medical Transcription Service

A good transcription service doesn't just produce medical records, it removes nearly all of the hassle of producing accurate, professional, well-formatted records.

Poor transcription services not only don't help with producing good records, they can cause more problems than they solve. This includes wasting office staff's time, exposing your practice to liability, and producing inaccurate records.

Even if you've been using a transcriptionist for years, you may not know all the finer points of quality transcriptions. If you're interested in the details of accuracy and hassle-free transcriptions, please see pages 3-5. If you're just interested in having things done right, here's a checklist to help you know what to expect – and make sure your expectations are met. And... if you're interested in top quality transcriptions, please feel free to email me at beth@transcribetrue.com or call me at 815-436-8989.

Beth Moss

Beth Moss
TranscribeTrue.com

Hiring a medical transcription service?

If you're considering hiring a medical transcription service, feel free to put us to the test. We're HIPPA compliant, and **very** detail oriented. Call us at 815-436-8989 or email beth@transcribetrue.com.

TRANSCRIBE TRUE

Checklist for considering a transcription service:

Is the transcription service interested in accuracy, content and format?

Service should be asking you about:

Contact information such as email or phone number for questions and corrections.
The transcriptionist should not guess.

A list of referring doctors for accurate and complete contact information.

How to handle obvious errors; can they be corrected by transcriptionist or should they be sent for review?

Your preferred format of documents including layout, font, margins, etc.

Is your transcriptionist in a “pool”?

Assigned transcriptionists learn your manner of speaking, commonly used medical terms, and preferred formatting, etc. They also adapt for small dictation errors. Pooled transcriptionists are much more likely to have errors and blanks in completed documents.

Pooled Transcriptionist / Individual Transcriptionist

Does the transcriptionist have English as their first language?

Transcribing dictation full of medical terminology can be a challenge in itself. It's even more challenging if you are not fluent in English and have limited understanding of English grammar and use.

English as first language / Non-native English speaker

TRANSCRIBE TRUE

1, 3 and 6 month review

Even after you've selected a transcription service, you will still want to periodically review their work. Once the service feels they have your business, they may stop being as conscientious.

Here's what to look for:

Corrections

Has transcriptionist contacted you for corrections? How often?

Were the corrections a waste of time (something they could have looked up in reference books, referral lists, etc.), or valid questions?

Billing Spot Check

Spot review documents for line counts. Ensure that the count is correct.

Accuracy Spot Check

Listen to a recorded transcription while reviewing the finished document. Does the data match?

Some common errors:

Omitting words, whole phrases and sentences. This is actually the easiest to miss. As long as the document reads properly, it's hard to know if something was dropped completely.

Misspellings, including drug names, medical conditions, and patient names.

Incorrect drug doses (milligrams instead of micrograms, for example)

Quick trick for checking accuracy / if the transcriptionist is paying attention:

Purposely say the age wrong. Is this caught?

Purposely say he for a female patient, left instead of right, etc.

TRANSCRIBE TRUE

What a Good Transcription Service Can Do For You

Patients don't pay for paperwork. They pay for a doctor's expertise. This means maintaining medical records is the least valuable use of the doctor's time. Using a transcription service not only saves a doctor's time, but also:

- Frees the doctor for more revenue-producing activities... and to have a life.
- Creates less work for office staff.
- Produces a more professional, accurate document than the doctor has time for.

All of this is impossible unless your transcription service does the job right. Unfortunately, not all transcription services are created equal. Here's what to look for... and what to watch out for.

Professionalism

Professionalism between medical transcriptionists can vary greatly. This is important because medical records are:

- Part of the patient's permanent medical record. This means that the record transcribed today will be around for years.
- A legal document that may be used in court.
- Used for insurance purposes. Unfortunately, questionable or poorly formatted documents can cause insurance companies to deny claims and otherwise cause billing problems.
- Important for follow-up. We've all heard the joke about doctors not being able to read their own writing. Professionally prepared documents prevent this problem.

Transcriptionists are also referred to as medical language specialists. This is their profession and this means *in theory*, they can produce a document as high quality and well written as the doctor themselves – in a fraction of the time.

In practice, quality varies. Many medical transcriptionists produce documents containing errors and inconsistencies. A few return medical records that are formatted better than the doctor has time for or the expertise to create.

TRANSCRIBE TRUE

Not All Medical Transcription is Equal

Low cost providers usually outsource work, often to offshore companies whose primary language is not English. Others outsource work to transcriptionists in the US, but don't have true quality assurance safeguards. Details cost time so they're often skipped. Sometimes words, phrases or even whole sentences are dropped from the transcription.

This is rarely caught, as it's relatively rare for transcripts and audios to be reviewed by the doctor. Often the doctors don't even have the audio files used for transcription and have no way of checking quality.

Here's a tip if you think this might be happening to you. MP3 recorders are inexpensive. Buy one and while you dictate (perhaps into a phone), record yourself. Then listen to the recording while reviewing the finished document. Does the data match?

Details Count

With the volume of patients most doctors see in one day, it's no wonder they can make the occasional mistake. A good transcriptionist will catch them. Common errors include:

- Drug doses. This includes mistaking milligrams for micrograms.
- Drug name. Doxylamine and doxycycline sound similar, but the first is an antihistamine and the second is an antibiotic.
- Age – Does the date of birth match the age?
- Opposites - Occasionally as a dictation progresses, he will be stated instead of she, left instead of right, etc. This is human nature when dealing with so much information.

A good transcriptionist will be conscientious and want to know how each client wants to handle potential errors, instead of just getting the work "out the door." If they don't ask who to talk to in case of a question, they're not interested in the details. Service providers like that are more interested in the money than document integrity. Guessing is quicker and easier, but quality and integrity takes time.

Formatting is also important. Make sure the service will work with you and custom tailor your document to your needs, and your preferred format. A good provider will be flexible and accommodate your needs, while many providers will try to force you to use the format most convenient for them.

TRANSCRIBE TRUE

Quality / Accuracy

I worked in a quality “assurance” position for a number of years for a service with an embarrassing level of quality. In this position, I wasn’t allowed the time to actually check the document for errors. Instead I was only allotted time to fix blanks left in the document, so the document looked complete. Often times I would “stumble” across other errors that were near the blank that would have been missed otherwise. There were more errors than I was given time to fix. It bothered me to let that work go on to the client knowing that it contained serious errors. There’s a shortage of transcriptionists that have the expertise to produce quality documents. Even for qualified transcriptionists, many companies don’t let their transcriptionists take the time to ensure accuracy.

The quality of your documents is also affected by how many people work on your reports. Not just because the medical transcriptionist will vary, but because a good medical transcriptionist will learn the nuances of the doctor’s specialty, their terminology and how they talk. They’ll be able to catch errors that weren’t obvious otherwise, and ask fewer questions when a doctor makes minor but repeated errors. Our ears also become “trained” to voices so the more familiar we are with a voice the more we will understand what is said. Most services use several workers from a “pool” to transcribe documents and therefore they never become better at consistently and accurately transcribing any one doctor’s reports.

Even if the transcriptionist takes the time to be accurate, is familiar with the terminology, and verifies facts, they can still have problems with accuracy. Not everyone has the capacity to pay attention to detail.

A list of referring physicians will save time during dictation – the name the referring physician can simply be stated without taking time to specify the spelling, address, phone, fax, etc. This saves time as well as ensuring accuracy.

Trial Period

It is a good idea to insist upon a trial period for any transcription service. If you do so, be sure to use the checklists on pages 2 and 3. Even after the trial period, it’s recommended you do periodic spot checks to ensure the quality is consistent.

That’s reason why I created the checklists - to help you evaluate services, and make sure you’re getting the performance you’re paying for.

Questions?

I hope this report gives you the background needed to make an informed decision. Feel free to contact me. Either call me at 815-436-8989 or email me at beth@transcribetrue.com.

Beth Moss

Beth Moss

Transcribe True