

Medical scribes reduce hospital wait time, study shows

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A new study from the University of Colorado Denver finds that medical scribes, or specialists who prepare patient medical charts, significantly decrease physician overtime and patient wait time in emergency room settings.

The study was released in the *American Journal of Health Economics* this month.

Andrew Friedson, a healthcare economist at CU Denver, conducted a nine-month randomized experiment in three [emergency](#) rooms in the Denver area to determine the causal impact of a scribe's presence on measures of physician productivity. His research shows scribes reduce patient wait times by about 13 minutes per patient. Scribes also greatly decrease the amount of time a [physician](#) spends after a shift completing patient charts, lowering overtime costs for emergency departments.

"Scribes are relatively new to the medical field, and not much is known about how they influence healthcare production," said Friedson. "This study confirms that scribes do indeed increase the efficiency of production in emergency rooms, and given these results, it's likely they could have other impacts on the healthcare sector, such as allowing physicians to focus more time on higher quality diagnoses, or simply provide better bedside manner by not splitting their attention between [patients](#) and charts."

Friedson acknowledges that medical scribes add an additional operating cost to hospital budgets and therefore hospitals with mostly quiet emergency [room](#) shifts will likely find scribes to be not worth the cost while hospitals with busy emergency room shifts may find them to be worth the investment.

Provided by University of Colorado Denver

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