



AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN ADVENTIST HEALTH INSTITUTION IN GHANA

Angela Ewhonne Nwaomah, PhD

University Registrar
Assistant Professor of Information and Records Management,
Adventist University of Africa,
Private Bag Mbagathi 00503, Nairobi, Kenya.

ABSTRACT

This paper is a report of a study that evaluated the practice of effective records management in the Seventh-Day Adventist Hospital in Kwadaso-Kumasi, Ghana. The study revealed that only 46.7 percentage of the records managers have professional qualifications/specialized training in records management. The findings also revealed that there is a positive level (51.1%) of effective records management practices in the hospital. However, those with the job title records manager faced some specific constrains that hinders the maximum achievement of records management effectiveness. The conclusion drawn is that, certain factors are responsible for the challenges. The paper then offers some recommendations that will help the hospital management and Ghana government deal with those challenges.

Key Words: Hospital, Records Management Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

Health is wealth and one of the statutory institutions that provides and supports citizenry's health is hospital. Hospitals, according to Yeo (1999) are those institutions that deal with life and health of their patients. Good medical care relies on well-trained doctors and nurses

and on high-quality facilities and equipment. Good medical care also relies on good record keeping. Without accurate, comprehensive up-to-date and accessible patient case notes, medical personnel may not offer the best treatment or may in fact misdiagnose a condition, which can have serious consequences. Good records care also ensures the hospital's administration runs smoothly. Records also provide evidence of the hospital's accountability for its actions and they form a key source of data for medical research, statistical reports and health information systems. (Yeo,1999).

Records management according to Nigeria Health Organization Healthcare Records Management Steering Committee (2007:16) “is the systematic and consistent control of all records in which they are held throughout their lifecycle. Whether electronic or paper, the management of the record must be consistent; consistency over time. Managing records is always vital whether resources are adequate or scarce; control organizations need to control how records are produced, received, organized, registered, stored and retrieved, retained, destroyed or permanently preserved and all records that includes all documents, active and inactive, formal ones and informal regardless of the medium in which they are held is the systematic and consistent control of all records throughout their lifecycle.”

An Overview of the Seventh-day Adventist Hospita, Kwadaso-Kumasi, Ghana

The Adventist Health Institution being referred to in this paper is called Seventh-day Adventist Hospital in Kwadaso-Kumasi, Ghana. The hospital is an eighty four (84) bed mission hospital established by the Central Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1990. The hospital is situated at Kwadaso along the main Kumasi – Sunyani road, Metropolitan district of Ashanti region.

The hospital is a member of the Christian Health Association of Ghana under the Ministry of Health and it is also accredited to provide primary level health care to members registered under the National Health Insurance scheme and other private insurance bodies.

The hospital is divided into six (6) major departments; Medical, Nursing, Pharmaceutical, Administration, Biostatistical and Records, and Accounts. All these departments handle different types of records which are needed for the operations of that department and the hospital as a whole.

The hospital uses both electronic and paper records management system to create, maintain and preserve records. The various kinds of records that are created, maintained and

preserved in the hospital are; patients medical records, staff records, correspondences, memos, sale invoices, receipts, item tally cards, committees minutes etc. The hospital also acquires some records in the form of laws, policies, guidelines, and other documents for the proper running of the facility from other institutions.

All the different facet of the hospital operation is networked into a computer programme called “HAMS”. This program holds all the medical records of every patient who visits the facility, the drugs and drug usage records, and financial records. This software is managed by the systems administrator who ensures the smooth running of this program and gives technical support. Apart from the “HAMS” which serve as the main electronic records management system for the hospital, all the other departments also keeps some electronic records that are more specific to their work and department. For instance the Accounts department uses the SUNPLUS accounting software by the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to manage some aspect of the accounting records.

The hospital also uses a lot of physical records in the form of paper and films. There is a biostatistical and records department, which has a records center that houses all the medical records of patients in folders arranged in shelves. These folders are arranged according to the patient registration number in the shelves for easy access and retrieval when these patients revisit the hospital. This department is headed by biostatistician and works with a few of biostatistical assistants.

Another department that also creates, maintains and preserves records in the hospital is the department of administration, this department deals with all correspondences, maintains and preserve all administrative documents and also manages all staff records. The department also has a records center which houses all these records in shelves and cabinets. The record managers in this department are the hospital administrator, the human resource manager, and the administrative assistants.

The accounts department also creates, maintains and preserves records in the form of payment vouchers, sale invoices and receipts, health insurance records and documents, monthly and annual financial statements, operating budgets, records of creditors and debtors. The department also has a record center with cabinets and shelves that hold all these records. The chief accountant and his assistants are in charge of the management of these records.

The last department that also manages records is the pharmacy; this department keeps record of drugs and their usage in the hospital. Stores received invoices, tally cards, dangerous drugs records books, drug dispensing records, and adverse reaction records are all kept by this department and managed by the pharmacist and other staff of the department.

Doctors need medical records to support patient care, nurses needs the nursing notes for proper care of their clients and pharmacists needs proper records on drugs to manage drugs effectively. Inadequate records management practices has the tendency to derail the effective running of hospitals (Yeo,1999).

Statement of the Problem

Hospitals have been recognized for the vast range of health care services they offer from diagnosing, laboratory services, radiotherapy, surgical etc. and general outpatient services. Associated records, such as X-rays, specimens, drug records and patient registers, must be well cared for if the patient is to be protected. Without accurate, comprehensive up-to-date and accessible patient case notes, medical personnel may not offer the best treatment or may in fact misdiagnose a condition, which can have serious consequences. Unfortunately, this is the case with some hospitals. The Seventh-Day Adventist Hospital in Kumasi, being a mission hospital with high expectation from the public is required to offer better quality health care services than the other hospitals in Kumasi metropolitan. Hence, this study was carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of records management practices in Seventh-Day Adventist Hospital in Kwadaso-Kumasi, Ghana.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To find out the percentage of respondents with professional qualifications/specialized training on records management
- To evaluate the level of effectiveness of the records management practice of the hospital,
- To identify various challenges facing effective records management practices
- To make recommendation to Ghana Government and the Hospital Administration on how to deal with these challenges so as enable the hospital render quality service to the community.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is to make known the level of effectiveness in the Seventh-day Adventist Hospital, Kwadaso-Kumasi, Ghana in regards to records management. The findings in this paper will help the leadership to be aware of the state of effective records management practices, the challenges of records management confronting the hospital and address them accordingly.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY: The study was confined only to Seventh-Day Adventist Hospital in Kwadaso-Kumasi, Ghana. The questionnaires were limited to the personnel who handle records in Biostatistics and records, Pharmacy, Accounts and Administration departments.

METHODOLOGY

Research Instrument: An investigator- structured questionnaire was designed specially to meet the objective of the study. “*An Assessment of Effectiveness of Records Management Practices Questionnaire*” was used to collect data from the respondents. Section A of the questionnaire focused on respondents’ demographic data. Section B elicited information on respondents’ specialized knowledge for records or archival management. Section C elicited information on respondents’ perceived effective records management practices. While Section D elicited information on the challenges faced by respondents with effective records management practices.

Sample: A sample of 20 key records managers was chosen for the study.

Sampling Technique: A convenient random sampling procedure was used to select those who participated for the study.

Primary Data: Was collected by administering the questionnaire.

Secondary Data: Was gathered from journals, reports, books and internet.

Method of Data Analysis: The descriptive analysis was facilitated with tables of frequencies and percentages. The analysis provided insight into distribution of the respondents based on demographic characteristics and responses to the survey statements.

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Out of the 20 copies of questionnaire distributed to the key records managers, 15 representing (75%) were duly completed and returned. While 5 copies representing (25%) of the survey instrument were not returned. Thus, the result presented was based on the 15 copies of the questionnaire that were duly completed.

Gender of Respondents

The total number of respondents involved in the research were fifteen (15), 73% (n=11), were males while 27% (n=4) were females

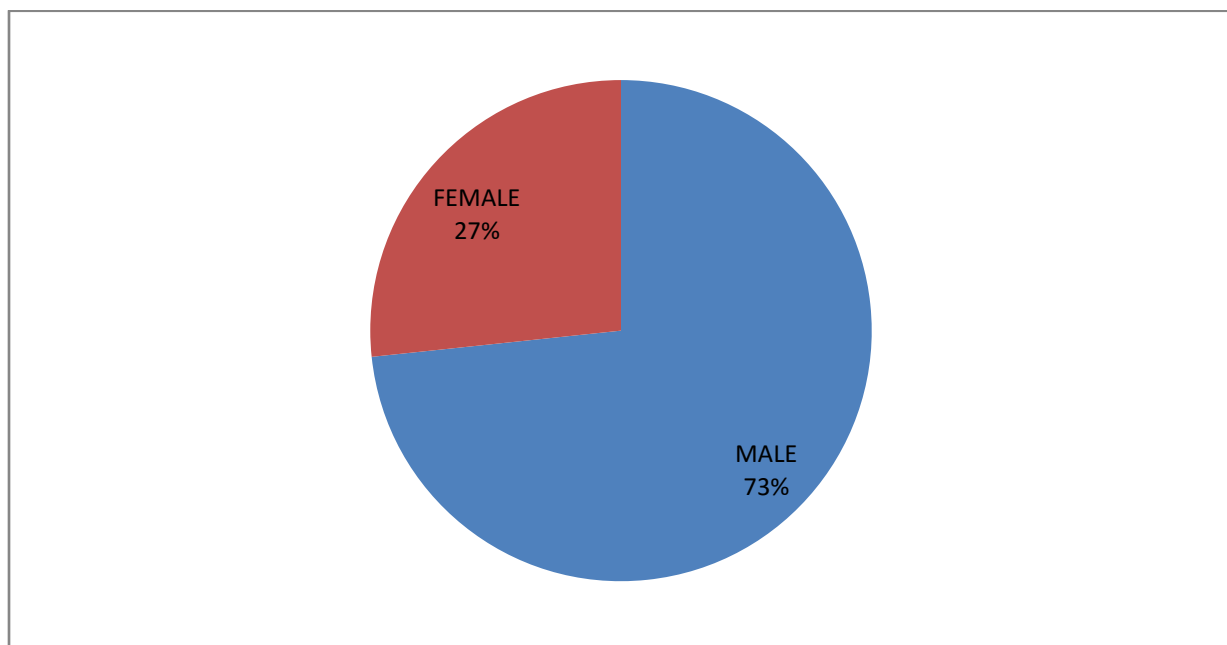


Figure 1: Gender distribution of respondents

Table 1: Age distribution of respondents

Age Range	Frequency (n)	Percentage
21-25	0	0
26-30	2	13.3
31-35	6	40
36-40	5	33.3
41-45	1	6.7
46-50	1	6.7
51-55	0	0
56-60	0	0
Total	15	100

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Educational Background and Departmental Distribution of Respondents

Table 2: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
SSSCE	0	0
DIPLOMA	3	20
BACHELORS	11	73.3
MASTERS	1	6.7
DOCTORAT	0	0
TOTAL	15	100

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 2 above shows that More (73%) (n=11) of the respondents are bachelor degrees holders.

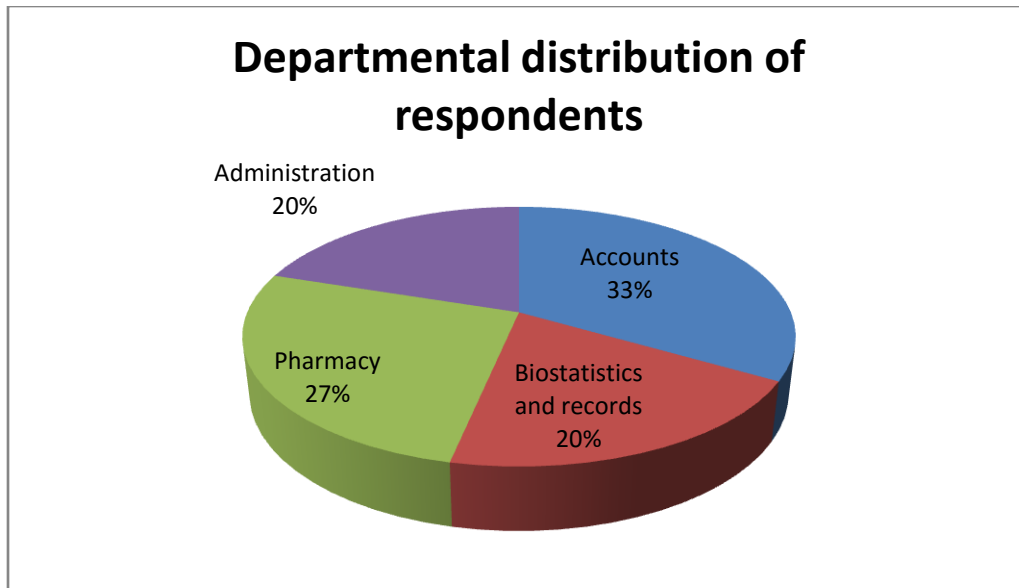


Figure 2: Departmental distribution of respondents

Working Experience of Respondents

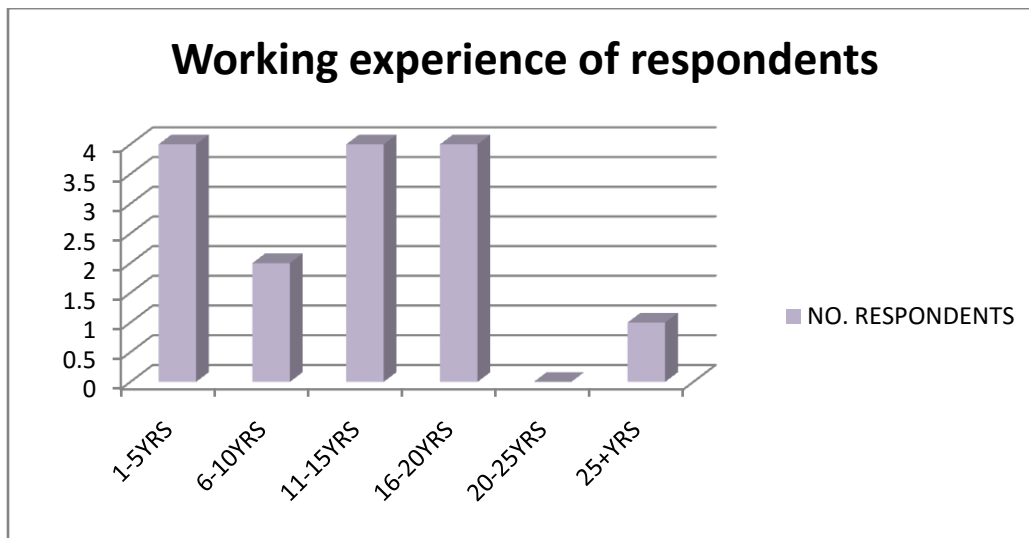


Figure 3: Working experience of respondents.

Four respondents had worked between 1-5years, another four respondents for 11-15years and, another four respondents for 16-20years in the hospital corresponding to 26.7% each. Two respondents had worked between 6-10years (13.3%), one (6.7%) respondent had worked for more than 25 years while no respondent had worked between 20 and 25 years.

Table 3: Respondents Professional Qualification/Specialized Training on Records Management

Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Undecided (U) ; Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD)

QUESTION	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL
I have a formal qualification in records and archives management?	2 (13.3%)	5 (33.3%)	1 (6.7%)	4 (26.7%)	3 (20%)	15
I have attended an in-service workshop or seminar on records and archives management	3 (20%)	4 (26.7%)	0 (0%)	4 (26.7%)	4 (26.7%)	15
TOTAL	5	9	1	8	7	30
PERCENTAGES	16.7%	30%	3.3%	26.7%	23.3%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2016

The above table reveals that 46.7% of the respondents attest that they have professional qualification and have attended in-service workshop or seminar on records and archival management. This implies that most of those with the job title records manager have no specialized training on records management. This is contrary to Ngulube (2000) suggestion that “individuals who manage records through their entire life cycle must have some specialized knowledge attained through training. In describing a profession, Titus (1947,296) states that it consists of “a limited group of persons” with “some special skill” and can “perform that function in society better than the average person”. Implicit in this observation is the claim that for one to be a professional records manager there is a need to undergo some form of specialized training to acquire the requisite skills.”

Table 4: Records Manager Responses to Effective Records Management Practices in the Hospital

Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Undecided (U) ; Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD)

QUESTION	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL
My Organization has a written records management policy	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	6 (40%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)	15
My organization has some measures of preserving and protecting records and archives against deterioration and destruction in the event of an emergency or disasters?	3 (20%)	8 (53.3%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	15
There are policies, standards or procedures for me to use in the control, the creation, maintenance and use of records in my organization?	5 (33.3%)	4 (26.7%)	3 (20%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	15
I have had difficulties in accessing a certain records needed daily work routines?	3 (20%)	7 (46.7%)	2 (13.3%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)	15
We do have some systems for the management of electronic records in my organization	5 (33.3%)	6 (40%)	0 (0%)	4 (26.7%)	0 (0%)	15
We have sufficient filing cabinets for the filing and management of paper records in my organization	0 (0%)	8 (53.3%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	3 (20%)	15
We do have problems of accumulation of records in my offices/organization	6 (40%)	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)	6 (40%)	0 (0%)	15
There are records which we have not accessed for more than three years in my organization	2 (13.3%)	3 (20%)	5 (33.3%)	3 (20%)	2 (13.3%)	15
I am familiar with the term records appraisal	2 (13.3%)	8 (53.3%)	3 (20%)	2 (13.3%)	0 (0%)	15
My organization has a regular schedule for appraisal of its records	1 (6.7%)	5 (33.3%)	5 (33.3%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	15
There are established criteria to assign values to records during appraisal in my organization	1 (6.7%)	4 (26.7%)	4 (26.7%)	5 (33.3%)	1 (6.7%)	15

Have you ever disposed useless/obsolete records in your organization	2 (13.3%)	6 (40%)	4 (26.7%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)	15
There are clear policies to determine obsolete records and which records to be disposed in my organization	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	4 (26.7%)	5 (33.3%)	2 (13.3%)	15
My organization has a records management chief officer who oversees records management practices and standards	5 (33.3%)	5 (33.3%)	1 (6.7%)	3 (20%)	1 (6.7%)	15
My organization subscribes to On-Line Hosting for critical documents	4 (26.7%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	5 (33.3%)	2 (13.3%)	15
There is a documented filing system in my organization	5 (33.3%)	6 (40%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)	15
In the unlikely event of a disaster, my organization has document replacement coverage	3 (20%)	2 (13.3%)	4 (26.7%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	15
The records management procedure in my organization is adequate	2 (13.3%)	3 (20%)	4 (26.7%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	15
Total	54	84	52	56	24	270
Percentage	20	31.1	19.3	20.7	8.9	100

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 4 above shows that 51.1 percent of the respondents attest to the fact that their hospital operates on effective records management. 26.6% of the respondents disagree to this fact while 19.3% are undecided.

It is very clear from the findings that the Seventh-day Adventist hospital, Kwadaso-Kumasi practices of records management effectiveness is more than average which implies positive. Though, this is not very high as may be expected from a mission hospital. This is an indication that the 46.7% of records manager with professional qualification/specialized training must have had an impact on the hospital 51.1% level of records management effectiveness.

SPECIFIC CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST HOSPITAL, KWADASO-KUMASI

The finding also revealed some specific challenges affecting the hospital from achieving an excellent records management effectiveness.

The challenges stated by the respondents are as follows:

1. Inadequate records storage facilities - insufficient cabinets, shelves and rooms or space for filing patient folders for filing documents
2. Lack of computers
3. Inadequate support for workers to pursue professional training in needed areas like records management.
4. Records accessing and retrieval is time consuming
5. No in-service training for records staff
6. Inadequate trained personnel

Factors Responsible for the Challenges

A critical look at the challenges stated above, suggests that the factors responsible for the difficulties in effective records management practices in the Kumasi Seventh-day Adventist hospital are mainly attributed to inadequate records storage facilities (challenges 1 and 2) associated to inadequate funding and inadequate training of records management personnel (challenges 3, 5 and 6). Challenge 4, is very likely a synthesis lack of proper training and inadequate storage facilities. These factors are discussed below:

Inadequate Trained Personnel/Technical Expertise.

One of the biggest challenges to the management of hospital records in developing countries like Ghana is educating the records custodians in hospital community on the best ways to handle hospital records. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that records management is not at the center of most medical science curricula. According to Adeyemi (2012) there are few places or nowhere where one can receive formal specialized education in preservation and conservation of hospital records and archives. Added to this is the fact that inadequate technical expertise is prevalent in the developing countries. Also, there is shortage of personnel/human capital. Chinyemba and Ngulube, 2005 posits that “In many African countries, human resources with appropriate skills, competences and attitude are not readily available to initiate, implement and sustain digitization project, and most African states are still lagging behind in technological and telecommunications infrastructure”.

Lack of Interest for Electronic Records Management

Due to inadequate skills in information and communication technology (ICT), many traditional record keepers and archivists especially in the Kumasi Seventh-day Adventist Hospital are conservatives and have phobia for computers. Because of generation gaps between the new and old professionals, computers are perceived as a threat to their status as experts. Ayoku and Ojediran, (2008) remarked that these “individuals find it difficult to cope or measure up with the requirements of the electronic/digital age, and are at the same time are too reluctant to jettison the old practices for new one”. Therefore to overcome this phobia, those working on records must learn to embrace the new trend and adjust to the era we are living in.

Inadequate Funding

The unavailability of funds and insufficient funds to run the facility makes it very difficult for the hospital management to procure enough records storage facilities, computers and its accessories. Digital projects are expensive and for effective and efficient records management, be it electronic or manual calls for sufficient funds to purchase the necessary equipment for this task. Digitization of records according to Jain (2012) requires enormous funding due to frequent hardware and software upgrades, and increasing cost of subscription to electronic databases, this makes them to be easily accessible by information seekers globally.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A structured and effective records management programme, covering all departments and all records irrespective of media, should be the aim of every hospital. The Seventh-day Adventist hospital, Kwadaso-Kumasi recognizes effective records management practices as very key to the day to day operation of the hospital. The findings of the study indicates that there is a positive level of effective records management practices in the hospital. However, there are some challenges that hinder the hospital from achieving excellent records management effectiveness. Thus, this study offers the following recommendations:

1. Records management should be seen by the hospital as a professionalized job. This will enhance the engagement of competent records managers and improve competency in records management.

2. It is necessary for the hospital to have a high level manpower supervisor with direct responsibility of records management as the hospital chief records manager or medical records administrator.
3. The hospital Administration should allocate adequate financial resources to the human resource development in the area of records management. Seminar/workshop on records management for records managers should be funded yearly by the hospital.
4. Money should be invested in the provision of sufficient records management infrastructure and acquisition of high-quality/modern facilities and equipment that would facilitate and sustain effective records management.
5. The management of hospital records cannot effectively be taken through its lifecycle without records management policies guarding it. Consequently, hospital administrators should develop, adopt, or acquire relevant records management policies that will guide the management of records in the hospital. This should be translated to a handbook called “SDA Hospital Kwadaso-Kumasi Records Management Handbook.”
6. The Hospital Administration should through the Quality Assurance Departments ensure compliance with the hospital stated policies on effective records management.
7. The Ghanaian Government/Ministry of Education should encourage curricular review that will include hospital records management in the medical sciences degree programmes.

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