# WRITING ENGLISH LETTER IN MEDICAL COMMUNICATION

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## Abstract

*Teaching writing English letters in medical communication is very important. Writing formal letters in medical communication is the means of communication between health professionals and other departments. Written information is essential to track patient's journey in the treatment process. However, little is known about writing good English letters in medical communication. This paper describes how to write good English letters in medical communication. This is a narrative literature review. The journals chosen were published within 10 years. Some examples of writing letters in medical communication include referral letters, curriculum vitae, medical records, etc. Those letters are critical for monitoring patient condition, administrative, and medicolegal purposes. Effective and clear letters might improve patient care. In conclusion, writing English letters in medical communication should provide effective and clear information regarding the patient's progress for administrative and medicolegal purposes.*

*Keywords: Medical communication; medical record; medicolegal; referral letter; writing letter*

## INTRODUCTION

Writing is useful for communication among people. In medical communication, writing letters is used to communicate regarding patient care. Effective medical communication is crucial in improving healthcare services outcomes. It will reduce errors and increase patient satisfaction. Written documentation gives important information for patient progress, medicolegal, and insurance purposes. Writing formal letters in medical communication is the means of communication between health professionals and other departments. Written information is essential to track a patient's journey in the treatment process (Drahaman et al., 2025; Vermeir et al., 2015).

A good medical writing letter will ensure patient safety and continuity of care. Poor communication might causse discontinuity of care, inadherence to treatment, dissatisfaction, and poor outcome. A room for improvement is available for content and timeliness of writing medical letters (Drahaman et al., 2025; Vermeir et al., 2015).

Writing referral letters is also considered as one of the effective communication. The referral letter integrates continuity of care without endangering the patient. If the referral letter is not written appropriately, it might cause negligence and compromise patient care (Drahaman et al., 2025).

Incomplete, unclear, and ineffective medical written documentation might increase the risks of adverse events during the treatment period. Incomplete and inaccurate information might lead to false diagnosis and treatment. However, little is known about writing good English letters in medical communication, including the appropriate content and form (Sangah et al., 2024). This paper describes how to write good English letters in medical communication.

**METHOD**

This is a narrative literature review. The journals chosen were published within 10 years. The selected journals and sources are from PubMed, Science Direct, and Google Scholar. The screening criteria are availability as full text in English and categorization as review or research.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Some examples of writing letters in medical communication include referral letters, curriculum vitae, medical records, medical discharge letters, medical certificates, consultation letters, and summaries. Those letters are critical for monitoring patient condition, administrative, and medicolegal purposes. Effective and clear letters might improve patient care (Schwarz et al., 2019).

The medical discharge letter is an important document between physicians and hospitals. It is a legal communication for insurance companies, patients, and lawyers. A clear and timely letter will demonstrate an understandable recommendation. Writing medical discharge letters is rarely included in the medical education curriculum. However, the medical discharge letter is an important document because it contains the patient's diagnosis, therapy, and recommendation. This information is essential for future treating physicians (Schwarz et al., 2019).

Referral and discharge letters are the most commonly used forms in healthcare services. Referral letters are categorized into three types based on the requests for specific treatment and assessment, second opinion, and mutual responsibility for patient holistic care. Besides as a discharge note for the patient when leaving from hospitalization, the function of discharge letters is also as an answer from a specialist visit without hospitalization (Vermeir et al., 2015).

A piece of good written information should be easily understood by the stakeholders. Based on the Occupational English Test, the important clues in letter values are conciseness, completeness in the information of patient background, current condition, examination, follow-up, and treatment(Choudhury et al., 2022).

Writing letters requires effective communication. It should be clear and concise. Clear communication is effective in delivering patient information among healthcare professionals. Medical letters are important for sharing patient information (laboratory results, diagnosis, and management), communicating with other healthcare personnel (specialists, physicians, and insurance), and facilitating continuing care (Drahaman et al., 2025).

The advantages of written communication are the functions as references purposes in the future, the flexibility of distribution, and the medicolegal value. Letters provide extra information to enhance the understanding of the problems, implications, management, and prognosis. Therefore, letters have an educational value(Vermeir et al., 2015).

The recommended content of referral letters are personal information (including contact person), history of disease, tretament, past history of disease, social situation, and assessment. Reason of referral must be stated. In psychiaric cases, the patient's involvement in the treatemnt should be written (Vermeir et al., 2015).

Based on a research from 350 referral letters, there was only few upper gastro-intestinal symptoms were written at the referral letter of patient with gastrointestinal cases. Sometimes, the referral letters do not always address a specific question and therefore, a real information exchange is disabled. Another case of referral letters from oncology departement revealed that oncologists wanted to have deeper information regarding the medical status and special consideration. Meanwhile, the general practisioners needed further information about the management, future plan, and expectation. Thus, discharge letters might not always describe the detail condition of the patient and the need for home care visit. The main information that should be mentioned in the discharge letter are main diagnosis, physical finding, laboratory result, medication, and follow-up schedule (Vermeir et al., 2015).

There were four domains in the referral or consultation letters as follow: patient details, administrative details, clinical details, and discharge/referral details. A good referral letter should mention the reason for referral. A well-structured letter will be easily understood. A timeliness letter is a good contributor to effective communication. Delayed letter could cause inefficient communication (Sawhney et al., 2023).

Writing effective letters requires a concise and clear communication style. Jargon and technical terms should be avoided because non-medical staff and patients might be unfamiliar with it. Specific details regarding the patient's latest condition, history, and management should be provided. Proofread is useful for free errors checks and rechecks (Choudhury et al., 2022).

Some useful tips for writing medical letters are as follows (Choudhury et al., 2022):
1. A patient-centered approach is useful to handle the patients' needs and concerns. The latest condition and treatment plan are provided.
2. Being on time means sending the medical letters within 24-48 hours of the visit or hospital stay of the patient.
3. Use safe communication channels such as encrypted email or fax to ensure confidentiality.
4. Keep copies of the letters which were sent and received as documentation.

Some challenges and limitations in writing medical letters are time constraints, technical difficulties, and confidentiality. There is a limitation of time in writing medical letters. Delays might lead to adverse events. Poor internet connectivity and lack of equipment could delay the process of writing and sending medical letters. Medical letters have sensitive information of the patient (current disease, allergy, history, and treatment), therefore, confidentiality is a must. When there is a difference between a patient's opinian and physician's, the medical letters are useful as reflection and proof that the patient's opinion and view have been addressed. Electronic medical records are used to simplify the process of writing letters (Sawhney et al., 2023).

Common mistakes in writing medical letters are lack of clarity, lack of completeness, and ineffective. An unclear way of distributing information might cause misunderstanding. Incomplete information could cause information gaps. Ineffective written letters might lead to confusion and conflict. The problems above can be managed by writing in clear language and using complete information. A well-structured sentence and format will improve the quality of healthcare services. Training, using standardized templates, and monitoring

might be done as effective strategies to enhance the quality of writing letters in medical communication (Sawhney et al., 2023).

The language, content, and accuracy in the medical letters might affect the patients' emotions while reading them. The patient has the opportunity to read the letter, therefore word choice is very crucial. Good and wise word choices could enhance the trust between physicians and patients. Using plain, simple, and clear English language is important to gain better patient understanding. Medical jargon should be avoided to prevent misunderstanding. Instead of saying "Your medication makes you *akathisia* and *bradykinesia*, it is better to change them with difficulty to stay still (replace *akathisia*) and slowed-down movement (replace *bradykinesia*). Abbreviations usage limitation is better to increase comprehensive understanding. Non-judgemental language means be objective as much as possible.  Try to include all the relevant details might prevent non-judgmental statements and interpretations. Medical letters are intended to reduce confusion, clarify diagnosis, and treatment (Sawhney et al., 2023).



**Figure 1.** Example of a simple appointment letter (Sawhney et al., 2023)

## Using artificial intelligence in writing letters

Using artificial intelligence in writing letters could be in the form of translation, especially when English is not the physician's mother tongue. A combination of human translation and artificial intelligence (AI) might be the answer (Correia & Harmer, 2024). Due to some medical terms, a medical interpreter is preferable in case the doctor has low proficiency in English. Therefore, training should be provided to ensure better quality in communication strategies and ethics. Effective communication strategies will yield better outcomes(Sangah et al., 2024).

Translation into patient's mother tongue language will significantly increase the patient's understanding and engagement. This condition will enhance trust, engagement, and outcome. The language gap can be shortened via the integration of machine translation. However, it requires consideration of accuracy in translation and cultural relevance to prevent disparities (Sangah et al., 2024).

Based on the research by Drahaman et al., in 2025, assessing a better referral letter of ENT cases needs some criteria as follows: referral sources (physical, ward referral,from other clinic, or walk-ins), referral type (electronic or hand written), content of referral (up to date, target consultant, correct patient information, relevant medical history, clear purpose and referrer, the referral timeframe), validity of referral, and type of the treatment (urgent or routine)(Drahaman et al., 2025).

Referral by electronic system is better than the handwritten. The hospital electronic medical report system contains more systematic structure. The system can generate automatic data such as referrer and referee name, time, and date. The relevant past medical history is incorporated into the letter, including the patient admission and treatment. The authenticity of letter origin is reliable because there is a personal login for each officer. It is recommended to deliver a training in letter writing using a structured format (Pro forma) referral letter (Drahaman et al., 2025).

Open AI's ChatGPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) is a unique chatbot that answers some questions and performs writing tasks by using a conversational tone. Within the first month, many sectors use this chatbot, such as medicine (include medical communication), research, and education. Some artificial intelligence (AI) tools are utilized for data analysis, research, and writing. Nevertheless, using chatbots might induce inaccuracies, bias, and ethical issues. Potential homogenization of writing could happen. originality and authorship are two main concerns in ethical issues. Due to these concerns, the use of AI should be an integration with human oversight and academic integrity. AI has transformative potential in manuscript composition while maintaining the significance of human creativity, expertise, and ethical responsibility. When using correctly, AI will upgrade the knowledge and save time (Ahaley et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2024).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, writing English letters in medical communication should provide effective and clear information regarding the patient's progress for administrative and medicolegal purposes. Medical letters have critical roles in ensuring treatment continuity and positive health outcomes. Some recommendations for writing a good medical letter in English are using a standardized format (introduction, body, and conclusion), secure communication channels (encrypted email or fax)to ensure confidentiality, providing concise and clear information, and keeping a record of medical letters.

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