This practicum experience served as the foundation for a Capstone which made policy recommendations regarding the aforementioned section 507 of the VA MISSION Act. Thus, daily activities included:

- Literature review of medical scribes and observational data collection tools
- Developing a guide for observing and evaluating scribe utility in the emergency department
- Modeling as an interviewee in the development of a guided interview template for scribe champions (major site-specific stakeholders in the scribe pilot)
- Developing a qualitative matrix for categorizing and analyzing interviews with scribe champions

**Methods**

Initially, I conducted a literature review on medical scribes and available observational tools for qualitative studies.

- I then developed an observational guide for evaluating scribes’ potential utility to the emergency department using both relevant background literature and personal clinical experiences in varied healthcare settings
- The guide was adapted through a focus group session where participants observed patient-provider and scribe-provider interactions using videos of medical encounters with scribes
- I tested the scribe champion interview guide via telephone interview, offering feedback
- Sherry Ball and I co-creates a matrix for categorizing and analyzing transcripts of Scribe Champion interviews, which we refined through application and utilization

**Lessons Learned**

Qualitative research generates a different type of data and focuses on unique goals compared to quantitative studies:

- Qualitative data are often implicitly difficult or impossible to quantify because observational results are too nuanced for simple categorization
- However that same nuances allow for more subtle, derived conclusions to be made and to more effectively direct future research efforts
- Furthermore, the unique perspective of qualitative approaches can support, explain, and/or question the meaning of some quantitative data

Implementing and evaluating large scale policy requires compartmentalized, sequential efforts:

- Achieving the broader goal of improving scribe usage in the VA system required first understanding how scribes can be and are currently used
- Complex organizations like the VA require multi-level analyses for research: departmental experience, administrative program oversight, site-specific differences, and national coordination
- Before embarking on said analyses, we needed appropriate tools for data collection and interpretation that would yield necessary data or aligned directly with program objectives

Research tools must be developed in accordance with project objectives and a clear analytical plan:

- Generating an observational guide as a final product required literature analysis, identification of goals, and refinement through focus groups

Interprofessional collaboration is essential to capturing qualitative research breadth and scope:

- By incorporating experience from diverse healthcare professionals, our research tools more comprehensively addressed the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders
- This generates data analyses that are more broadly understandable by varied audiences and generally applicable to policy decision-making

**Deliverables**

- Observation Guide for Evaluating Scribe Utility in Emergency Departments
- Interview Guide for Scribe Champions
- Analytical Matrix for Scribe Champion Interviews

**COVID Effects**

Originally, the observation guide was intended for in-person data collection at each pilot site. Unfortunately, COVID made such travel impossible and we were unable to utilize the final version of the guide

Scribe Champion interviews were conducted via phone to accommodate travel restrictions as well

Transcribing, categorizing and analyzing interviews according to the matrix were all completed remotely

**What Happened Next?**

Though the observation guide could not be used, the insight gained from designing it was applied both when modeling the interview guide and developing the interview analytical matrix.

The tools developed through this Practicum were then used for data collection and analysis during the Capstone Project. Incorporating our qualitative data with a separate quantitative team’s results, our team produced a final report that was responsive to the needs of the program office and could provide the data mandated by Federal law

**Public Health Implications**

The tools developed through this practicum generated data that will directly influence Federal policy for the VA and may also be used to further other qualitative research enterprises

Scribe utilization could improve provider efficiency, reduce physician burnout, and increase patient satisfaction. Given that the VA is the largest integrated health system in the United States, scribes represent a substantial potential investment in achieving these outcomes for veterans.

The VA’s role, as a direct example to major non-federal healthcare institutions on both the potential of scribes and methods for scribe implementation, with potential impacts even beyond the VA

**Acknowledgements**

I offer my sincere gratitude for the insight and guidance of Sherry Ball, PhD, my ever-constant preceptor for this research experience.

This work is also due to David Arron, MD, MS and the VA Quality Scholars of 2019-2020 for their contributions

Additionally, I must thank Todd Otteson, MD, MPH for his guidance and support

Lastly, to the scribe research team, it was a pleasure to work with and learn from you all