OpenEyes - Writing Letters

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Target Audience

General Interest	
Healthcare managers	
Ophthalmologists	✔
Developers	✔

Amendment Record

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Introduction

Generation of correspondence is an essential part of healthcare management, particularly in the modern multidisciplinary environment. Written communication is necessary between healthcare professionals of different disciplines or on different sites, and with patients, as well as with a host of other organisations such as social services and the DVLA. Currently most communication is in paper form, but it is likely that email, text messages and other forms of communication technology will play an increasing part.

This document describes the OpenEyes letter writing module, which is designed to meet the needs of all patient related communication. The design is sufficiently flexible to support the complete range of options for letter generation, from a dictaphone to a formulaic letter. The module makes use of information already in the database to streamline the user experience and reduce errors.

Interface

The module is called up by clicking on an icon in the toolbar, or the associated key combination. This is appropriate since the outcome of the letter generation is a clinical event. The layout is shown in figure 1. A series of text boxes represent sections of the letter which are described in the following table. For all text boxes, Text can either be entered directly, or preferably chosen from an adjacent drop down menu.

Section	Description
Addressee	The prime recipient of the letter.
Date	The date the letter was generated
Salutation	Dear Mr Smith, or Dear Fred. A check box allows the selection of a nickname if this field is not empty
Subject	Standard set of data identifying the patient, including full name, address, date of birth and hospital/NHS number
Body	The body of the letter
Signature	The sign off and description of the sender
Courtesy copies	A set of addressees to copy the letter to

Drop down menus on the left hand side of the page call up data from the database and put text in the appropriate box. These are of three types;

1. Contacts

The top and bottom two drop down menu allow selection of patient contacts from those in the contacts table who are associated with the patient. These are selected in the contacts module accessible in patient mode.

2. Macros

The macro drop down selected entire letters from a set of predefined macros. The definition of each includes the addressee as well as the text of the letter, and is defined at the level of the service. Macros can be added and edited in admin mode.

3. Letter phrases

This set of drop down menus contains phrases which are used to make up the body of a letter. These phrases can be defined at the level of the consultant firm, allowing a great deal of customisation.
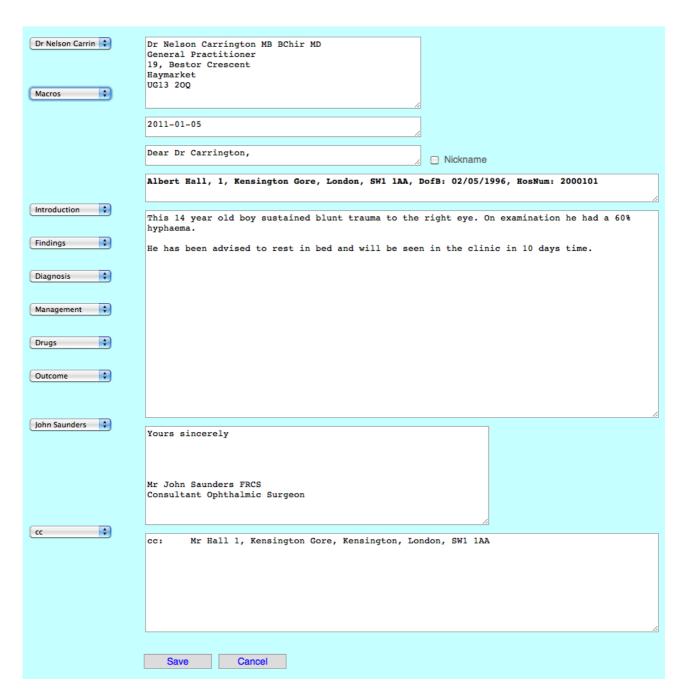

Figure 1. The interface for the letter writer

Substitution strings

The utility of the macros and letter phrases is considerably enhanced by the use of substitution strings. These are three letter codes demarcated by square brackets. The letter module expands each code into an item from the database.

For example, the following phrase might form the introduction to a letter;

> *Thank you for referring this [age] year old [sub].*

In the case of a 74 year old female patient, this would be expanded by the letter writing module into;

> *Thank you for referring this 74 year old woman.*

The range of current and planned substitution strings is listed in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1

The following table lists the current and planned substitution strings which can be included in letter phrases and macros.

String	Status	Description	Example
adm		Admission date	23/12/2011
age	✔	Age of patient in years	62
con	✔	Conclusion	he would benefit from patching of the right eye
drg		Patient's current medication	chloramphenicol, maxidex
epd	✔	Principal diagnosis for episode	Monofixation Esotropia Syndrome
eps	✔	Principal side for episode	right, left, bilateral
fam		Family history	glaucoma
hpc	✔	History of presenting complaint	loss of vision for 6 months
ipb	✔	Intraocular pressure in both eyes	
ipl	✔	Intraocular pressure in the left eye	
ipp	✔	intraocular pressure in the principal eye	
ipr	✔	Intraocular pressure in the right eye	
asb	✔	Anterior segment findings in both eyes	left 20% hyphaema
asl	✔	Anterior segment findings in the left eye	
asp	✔	Anterior segment findings in the principal eye	
asr	✔	Anterior segment findings in the right eye	
psb	✔	Posterior segment findings in both eyes	
psl	✔	Posterior segment findings in the left eye	
psp	✔	Posterior segment findings in the principal eye	
psr	✔	Posterior segment findings in the right eye	
obj	✔	Patient as object	him, her
opl		Operations listed for	right cataract surgery
opr		Operations actually done	right cataract surgery, peripheral iridotomy
out		Outcome	
pos	✔	Patient possessive	his, her
pre		Prescription	G Chloramphenicol qid for 1 week

String	Status	Description	Example
pro	✔	Patient pronoun	he, she
sub	✔	Patient as subject	man, woman, boy, girl
trt		Treatment	
vbb	✔	Best visual acuity in both eyes	6/12 on the right and 6/9 on the left
vbl	✔	Best visual acuity in the left eye	6/6
vbp	✔	Best visual acuity in the principal eye	6/6 on the left
vbr	✔	Best visual acuity in the right eye	