

DynamicHealth Musculoskeletal services are fit for the future.



CHALLENGE:

- Significant growth in demand for musculoskeletal service
- Reduced administration support
- Evolution of organisation and infrastructure to meet growing demand for services

SOLUTION:

- Dragon Medical integrated into the department workflow and EPR
- Nuance Healthcare Connections Partner, GHG TalkingPoint, delivering workflow improvement, project management, training and support

RESULTS:

- GPs and patients informed of their care plan more quickly
 - Increased patient throughput and decreased waiting times
 - Team able to complete administration within contracted hours and go home on time
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Dragon Medical reduces back-office workload, speeds patient communication and helps clinicians achieve a better work-life balance.

“Physiotherapy and other Allied Health Professional services are undergoing exciting changes leading to whole system improvements in the NHS. Dragon Medical integrated into our clinical documentation delivers efficiencies that support that change and our growth.”

— Sarah Saul, Service Manager, DynamicHealth

Allied Health Professionals lead system improvements in the NHS

Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) are very well placed to positively influence public health in the UK:¹

- 170,000 AHPs in the UK deliver over 4 Million client/patient interactions per week
- AHPs work across NHS, Social Care, Education, Private and Voluntary Sectors
- Discuss healthy lifestyles and wellbeing within their assessments
- Work across the life-course in a wide range of specialties
- Use evidence based behaviour approaches
- Deploy interventions which develop ongoing relationships and rapport with patients

As a result, the way in which Physiotherapy and other Allied Health Professional (AHP) services are delivered are undergoing important and exciting changes which are leading whole system improvements across the NHS.

DynamicHealth getting fit for the future

[DynamicHealth](#) provides NHS physiotherapy and specialist services in addition to occupational health physiotherapy and pelvic health physiotherapy across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for people aged 16 years and over. These people may be living with or experiencing musculoskeletal (MSK) problems as a result of injury, strain, poor posture or following an operation.

“I can complete my notes with the patient or immediately after the appointment. Now I have no need for an ‘admin’ afternoon or to come in to the clinic just to sign letters. This time can now be used to see more patients.”

— Chris Sadie, Physiotherapist
DynamicHealth

DynamicHealth, provided by Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust, is actively involved in an initiative called fitforthefuture.org. This is a sustainability and transformation programme covering hospital services, community healthcare, mental health, social care and GP services (primary care). The aim is to work together and taking joint responsibility for improving the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough population’s health and wellbeing, outcomes and experiences of care.

DynamicHealth’s services are being expanded and redesigned. More Specialist Physiotherapists are being recruited to address the demand on community services. Some will remain within acute (hospital) care treating patients on the wards but increasingly therapists are being deployed away from centralised hospital departments into community clinics. In addition, vanguard projects within the NHS are looking at skill mixing the primary care workforce. In the future Specialist Physiotherapists will work within primary care practices where 18-33% of general practice workload is diagnosis and treatment of conditions and symptoms, which are musculoskeletal in nature e.g. orthopaedic, pain and rheumatology conditions. This approach ensures that the patients see the right professional at the right time and has many benefits to the system and patients including more rapid access, effective treatment, a reduction in the need for investigations and lower rates of prescribing of pain killers etc.

DynamicHealth’s services are delivered across the whole of Cambridgeshire in four geographically-related teams. Within the DynamicHealth specialist service there are currently eighteen Specialist Physiotherapists and one Specialist Podiatrist. The group is supported across the area with administrators working virtually and on site to process referrals, book appointments and manage patient pathways.

A Specialist will see between eight and twelve patients per day. Spinal patients are allocated forty-five minutes and peripheral limb patients thirty minutes. It used to be that following the consultation, the client/patient assessment was typed by each Physiotherapist into the the electronic patient record (EPR) and the GP/ patient letter created by an administrator from the Physiotherapist’s analogue dictation. The turnaround time of a letter was between six to twelve weeks (six weeks being the average). The letters would often need additions/amendments and the Physiotherapist would regularly need to review notes to remind themselves of the case.

Dragon Medical takes the strain

To accommodate the growth in demand for services, and reduce the dependence upon back-office support, Sarah Saul, Service Manager, DynamicHealth chose investments in technology and partnerships with technology providers that would maximise front-line services and reduce/ release administration backlogs and workload.

Sarah chose Nuance Dragon Medical front-end speech recognition integrated into the clinical documentation workflow. The team had some previous experience of using a non-medical version of Dragon but were frustrated with the poor accuracy in recognising medical terminology and with no integration of this product into the workflow or the EPR.

60

Dragon Medical incorporates
over 60 medical specialty
vocabularies



In contrast, Dragon Medical incorporates over 60 medical specialty vocabularies and, most importantly for this team, a musculoskeletal vocabulary. This boosts the speed and accuracy in capture of the patient story into treatment plans and other clinical documentation.

During or between patient appointments the Physiotherapists use Dragon Medical to directly update the EPR using voice macros to speed navigation between fields and populate regularly used blocks of standard text. For clinic letters, a voice command is used to call up the template for the clinic letter with pre-created 'Clinical Impression' and 'Management Plan' fields followed by an area for free text. Using Dragon Medical, letter creation, proof reading and finalising takes five to ten minutes for a new patient and less time for a follow up appointment. Swiftly, following the clinic, letter processing is then completed by the administrator and sent out to the GP and patient.

A dynamic partnership

The Dragon Medical speech recognition solution was delivered and implemented by Nuance Healthcare Connections Partner, [GHG TalkingPoint](#). It was essential for Sarah that IT providers worked well with one another and the GHG TalkingPoint team undertook an in-depth workflow analysis, integration with the EPR, ergonomics, installation and training. GHG TalkingPoint liaised closely with Specialists and administrators taking care to incorporate their feedback to ensure a streamlined workflow. The solution was piloted at one site before being deployed across the five other DynamicHealth sites. GHG TalkingPoint is still very much involved with the DynamicHealth team, providing day to day support and continuing to identify opportunities for workflow improvement and developing macros to speed the work of the team as it grows and develops.

A life in the day of the Physiotherapist

Physiotherapist Chris Sadie cannot imagine life before Dragon Medical and certainly would not want to return to the old days of analogue tapes, communication delays and letter backlogs. He has seen a significant improvement in turnaround time in letter delivery to the GP and patient of a maximum of two to five days, rather than the weeks it took previously. One of his patients even contacted him and told him it was the fastest she had ever received a letter from a hospital. If Chris's patient gives permission he is comfortable dictating notes in front of them. "By dictating my thoughts into the patient record with my patient present I give them the opportunity to correct me if I haven't understood or have mis-interpreted what they have said. This ensures a more accurate record of the consultation and improves the communication and understanding between us."

From the perspective of workflow, Chris feels using Dragon Medical makes it faster and more efficient. He has to give more up-front thought to the dictation using front-end speech recognition than with tapes, but in doing so he has hugely reduced the number of amendments to drafts. He no longer has to try and remember or look up the patient clinical details when reviewing a letter - often weeks later - saving his time and improving patient safety.

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The time that Chris has freed up from administration is used instead to triage orthopaedic patients reducing the backlog, improving throughput and he has more clinic capacity thus reducing wait times for these patients.

Service improvement

The goal for the length of time on the MSK pathway is eighteen weeks and the whole team has experienced improvements to this timescale as a result of reduced report and letter backlogs, faster referrals to secondary care and time freed up to chase diagnostic reports and patient and other patient facing activities. Dragon Medical has improved the quality of notes within the team easily dealing with accents and mumbling. Accurate spelling, fewer abbreviations and more complete notes have improved communication with patients, within the team and with other specialties.

Patients more involved in their own care

Letter turnaround has been reduced from weeks to days. Patients receiving a letter quickly after an appointment lets them know what to expect in the future with their condition and helps them feel involved in their own care. Dragon Medical is releasing clinicians from having to check letters and freeing them up instead to check and act on diagnostics and contact their patients. Administrative time has been freed up to allow more patient contact and hence increase the throughput of patients and reduce waiting times.

Better work-life balance for the team

Some members of the team are very slow at typing and as the patient notes are held within the EPR this has meant increased pressure on those members of the team. One member of the team has dyslexia and the opportunity to use speech-recognition instead of typing has been very useful and relieved a lot of stress from their working day. Dragon Medical had enabled clinicians to manage their time better and complete their administrative tasks within the contractual hours.

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This case study was originally published in Oct. 2017 and rebranded in Dec. 2021.

About Nuance Communications, Inc.

[Nuance Communications](https://www.nuance.com) (Nuance) is a technology pioneer with market leadership in conversational AI and ambient intelligence. A full-service partner trusted by 77 percent of U.S. hospitals and 85 percent of the Fortune 100 companies worldwide, Nuance creates intuitive solutions that amplify people’s ability to help others.