

# Rush University Medical Center improves efficiency and alleviates burnout

Nuance-led EHR optimization helps drive best-ever physician satisfaction scores with more effective use of Epic EHR.

## Challenge

- Excessive number of cumbersome and outdated notes templates
- Inefficient documentation with too much variability
- Failure to capture appropriate levels of care consistently
- Lack of EHR personalization
- High levels of burnout with low levels of professional satisfaction

## Solution

- EHR Optimization Services
- Dragon Medical One
- PowerMic Mobile
- Dragon Medical embedded in Epic Haiku and Canto

## Results

- Reduced number of standardized note templates by approximately 90%
- Increased EHR productivity by 41%
- Reduced time spent on documentation by 45%
- Over 99% of ED physicians approved discontinuing the use of scribes in favor of Dragon Medical One
- 97% of physicians believe their EHR efficiency will improve

Rush University Medical Center (RUMC) is a leading academic health system based in Chicago, Illinois with 669 beds across its facilities and handles approximately 35,000 admissions and 65,000 emergency room visits per year. The organization's mission is to improve the health of individuals and diverse communities through the integration of outstanding patient care, education, research, and community partnerships.



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**Brian D. Patty, MD**

Vice President of Clinical Systems and CMIO  
Rush University Medical Center

Beyond patient care, RUMC is committed to investing in caregivers' wellbeing—specifically for their clinical staff of over 2,800 physicians and nurses—by reducing provider burnout and improving professional satisfaction. “We firmly believe that to provide quality healthcare, the needs of caregivers should not be overlooked,” said Dr. Brian D. Patty, vice president of clinical systems and CMIO of RUMC.

Specifically, the organization worked closely with Nuance to make dramatic improvements in their documentation processes and overall EHR user experience following feedback from a general burnout survey as well as results from both the Stanford Medicine Physician Wellness Survey and the KLAS Arch Collaborative.

**Getting started by assessing priorities**

Since they were in the process of upgrading their existing Epic EHR, RUMC used the timing as an opportunity to engage the entire care team in a wider optimization effort designed to create a greater sense of ownership and promote more effective use of the EHR.

“We felt it was important to vet plans with the full team, not just physicians, to ensure all appropriate perspectives were taken into consideration,” said Dr. Patty. “Ultimately, the entire care team would be provided with ongoing education and training on the new tools as well as their roles and responsibilities to ensure a more balanced distribution of administrative tasks.”

Initially, RUMC implemented Dragon Medical One to take advantage of improved documentation and navigation tools. The cloud-based speech platform provides a consistent and personalized clinical documentation experience and allows providers to use their voice to securely capture the patient story and control applications more naturally and efficiently—anywhere, anytime. “Prior to Dragon Medical One, physicians saw the EHR as something imposed upon them,” said Dr. Patty. “Now, we see clinical teams appreciating the role of the EHR and the power of real-time information availability.”

For Emergency Department physicians specifically, over 99% approved the shift to discontinue using scribes in favor of Dragon Medical One.

**Building and configuring workflows to work**

In addition to implementing Dragon Medical One, the RUMC team turned to Nuance and its EHR Optimization Services to explore ways to further improve clinician productivity by taking full advantage of evolving EHR and Nuance solution features and functionality.

According to Dr. Patty, “We worked with Nuance to observe each clinic's operations, evaluate workflows, document pain points, and identify key improvement opportunities to address the broader issues contributing to burnout.” For example, the team consolidated from over 450 cumbersome and outdated documentation templates that were difficult to use, created too much variability, and made it hard for physicians to find critical information, to just 50 core standardized note templates—a reduction of nearly 90%.

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“We needed to make the everyday interactions easier,” said Dr. Patty. The team created over 20 clinical scoring SmartForms to use along with Dragon commands to capture various clinical scores and drive Evidence Based Practice for concerns like chest pain, shortness of breath, head injury, and fever/sepsis. Nuance's redesigned and integrated templates greatly expanded the use of Epic NoteWriter and ProcDoc. For pediatrics, they introduced 16 Health Care Maintenance templates and linked specific sections to MyChart Questionnaires so information parents provided would pre-populate into the form. “Everyone loves these changes,” said Dr. Patty.

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“Collectively, these efforts make documenting faster and easier while decreasing variability, better capturing appropriate levels of care and reducing the need for clinical documentation improvement (CDI) clarifications.”

**Training for efficiency**

Understanding proper training is critical to the success of any optimization efforts. In partnership with Nuance, RUMC and Rush Copley provided one-on-one personalization sessions to more than 600 providers to optimize their clinical workflows. Based on initial surveys and Epic Signal data the team collected, they were able to measure perceived improvements in overall satisfaction and actual efficiency gains.

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Of physicians polled, 97% indicated they expected their efficiency using the Epic EHR will improve and 100% agreed the one-on-one support session was an effective use of their time with 91% recommending it to a colleague. Dr. Patty cited one physician’s reaction to the optimization consulting from Nuance being “certainly well worth the time commitment—I’m so much more productive in the EHR. I can get in, do my work, and get on with my day.”

**Delivering results**

Working with Nuance, the RUMC team improved their user satisfaction score to achieve an overall physician EHR experience score of 54.5, the highest ever recorded for academic health systems in the KLAS survey to date.

“This represents a tremendous accomplishment,” said Dr. Patty. “By taking the time to listen to our staff and get underneath the causes of their frustrations, we were able to focus our attention and completely change the documentation process while creating a more seamless and productive EHR experience.”

Since implementing Dragon Medical One and EHR Optimization Services, RUMC has successfully reduced the amount of time spent on documentation by 45%. For Dragon Medical One specifically, post-implementation analysis reveals that providers are 41% more productive in the EHR when using speech recognition—with lines-per-hour rising from an average of 471 to 663. One-on-one training sessions further boosted Epic proficiency scores by 44% and reduced after hours and unscheduled time by approximately 25%—or eliminating nearly five hours per month/per user.

**Looking ahead**

Dr. Patty fully expects to continue focusing on training and optimization. The engagement with Nuance sparked a ‘culture change’ at RUMC. “Documentation efforts are so much more proactive and productive, said Dr. Patty. “With the entire care team engaged in the process, there is a greater sense of ownership and more of a willingness to work together to make ongoing improvements.”

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