Dragon Medical frees up more time to care at Coquet Medical Practice

Challenge
– Tight budgets and
  diminishing resources
– Slow turnaround of letters
– Out-dated technology,
  inefficient processes

Solution
– Review and refresh
  processes
– Dragon Medical Practice
  Edition 2 software
– Training and Support

Results
– Precious resource freed up
  to focus on patients
– Better levels of care and
  service
– Patient letters available
  instantly

Established over 40 years ago, Coquet Medical Practice is situated over two sites, three miles apart in North Northumberland. It has six partners and three GPs who treat just over 11,000 patients annually. Today, it is using Nuance Dragon Medical Practice Edition 2, the front end, real-time speech recognition solution, from Nuance Communications. It can dramatically reduce the amount of time GPs spend documenting care, by 30 minutes or more a day. Here, Lisa Scott, Practice Manager at Coquet Medical Practice, explains the drivers for the Practice's speech-based future.

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What were you doing before you started using speech recognition software?

Previously, the doctors would dictate to voice recorders. The tapes would then be given to the secretaries for transcription, and the usual turnaround time – except in urgent cases – was about two days. This transcription was almost a full-time role for the secretaries. However, if a secretary based at one site was off, their tapes had to be collected and brought back to the other site for transcription. This wasn't a very practical or efficient process, or a good use of time. Furthermore, the recorders were getting old and the audio quality from the tapes was deteriorating.

Why did you start using it?

When faced with secretarial natural wastage through two retirements, we conducted a review of working practices. Our approach is always to ask 'can we find a better way to do this?' rather than just carry out a like-for-like replacement. Discussions with our IT Department led us to the subject of speech recognition software. We then met with other practices that are using the technology, to learn about their experiences, from training, installation to day-to-day benefits. We were impressed by what we saw and also their enthusiasm for the technology. The doctors and admin were convinced it was saving them time and they are now Dragon Medical converts. Our IT department recommended that we spoke to authorised Nuance reseller partner VoicePower about training and installation. VoicePower was excellent and provided lots of demos, ongoing training and support. It provided one-on-one training for each Dragon user of about three hours per session, as well as online training.

How have you encouraged staff to use it?

Some staff took less encouragement than others. Some members of the team had tried speech recognition in the past, but didn't persevere with it. They were astonished at how much better the technology now is. Younger members of the team who have had more recent, positive experiences with speech technology, saw the benefits immediately and were keen to embrace the concept of swapping tape-based dictation for speech recognition. I, too, could see that it has improved a lot.

What difference did it make?

From a secretarial perspective, they now have more time to carry out other work tasks. With respect to patient letters, they take the transcribed text, put it in the appropriate letter format, proof-read it, then send the letters out. As we have turned them from typists into editors, letter turnaround times can now happen within a day - the process is so much more efficient. From a doctors' and patients' perspective, some doctors use Dragon Medical to create their consultation notes. Some are now doing this with the patient present, which reassures them that their consultation has been captured accurately, while also giving them the chance to make changes or correct a point if necessary.

Can you think of an example where speech recognition has led to a significant benefit?

Dragon makes work very accessible. By that I mean that the patient letters are there almost instantly, so secretaries can proof them straight away. Dragon has improved the information flow and it saves time. Secretaries can finish work quicker saving them a good few hours a week. It is a lot more effective than listening to crackling tapes.

What would you say have been the benefits for the trust overall?

The time-saving has been considerable, given the speed at which letters can be created and issued. Also, we have not had to budget for extra headcount to replace the secretaries that have retired, while our existing secretaries can now concentrate on other patient-facing tasks to provide an even better level of care and service.

About Voicepower

Established in 1993, VoicePower has been supplying speech recognition solutions and dictation products for more than 20 years and in that time we think we've found our own 'voice' in terms of what we offer our clients. Our certified trainers are highly skilled in applying the power of voice to innovate productivity, accessibility and data flows in a number of organisations through leading edge technology that will give you back time whilst making you more efficient.

About Nuance Healthcare

Nuance healthcare empowers healthcare provider organisations and individual doctors to accurately capture and transform the patient story into meaningful, actionable information in 22 languages. Today, over 10,000 care giver organisations and 500,000 users worldwide trust Nuance voice recognition technology to deliver higher quality care, improve financial performance and enhance compliance efforts.