

Northern Health enhances the continuity of patient care

Secure, cloud-based speech recognition delivers high-quality, accurate documentation immediately available in the EHR.

Challenge

- Improve timeliness and quality of patient documentation
- Support new integrated professional team approach
- Increase mobility of physician documentation
- Grow adoption of electronic health records through coordinated speech recognition strategy

Solution

- Nuance Dragon Medical One
- Nuance PowerMic Mobile

Results

- Immediacy of patient reports has positive impact on patient care decisions
- Mobility offers greater physician access across geographically dispersed areas
- Easy-to-use solutions help boost EHR adoption and standardize clinical documentation

An integrated approach to patient care

Northern Health is charged with caring for the population that resides in the largest geographical region within British Columbia. Nearly 1,000 physicians are dedicated to serving as many as 30,000 communities and approximately 300,000 people every year. By committing to a culture of continuous quality improvement, the organization is leading the way in providing an integrated approach to the patient care continuum.



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William Clifford, MD
Chief Medical Information Officer
Northern Health

Northern Health understands high quality, timely patient documentation is key to helping people live well while preventing disease. Clinicians need access to current patient data to provide the best care. Northern Health rolled out Dragon Medical One cloud-based speech recognition and PowerMic Mobile to ease the documentation burden and promote care team collaboration—and better serve their community. Now, providers create accurate, high-quality documentation directly in the electronic health record (EHR) in real time, from any location.

Real-time, high-quality documentation more relevant than ever

Lisa Gregoire, Director of Health Information Management at Northern Health, says, “We’ve redesigned how we deliver primary and community care. We’re leading the country in this effort to de-silo the healthcare system. In other words, we want our patients to be able to go to a community clinic to receive everything they need.”

Increasing adoption of the EHR is key to integrating care. Usage was low among Northern Health providers, however, in part because many providers travel between locations across the Northern Health geography. “We had to make the process more modern and manageable with an approach that offered portability as well as quick and easy documentation in the EHR,” Gregoire says. “Successful implementation across our organization has increased physician confidence to adopt new technologies like speech recognition and has increased our physicians’ ability to effectively direct patient care.”

Secure cloud-based solution offers Northern Health mobility across geographies

Nuance helped Northern Health in the past when documentation workloads peaked. When Gregoire learned about Dragon Medical One, she realized providers would be able to access speech recognition and their personal voice profile—custom vocabularies and time-saving automated workflows—regardless of where they might be working on any given day.

Northern Health began its search for an enterprise-wide, front-end speech recognition solution and selected Dragon Medical One with the added benefit of PowerMic Mobile, an app that allows providers to use their mobile device as a secure wireless microphone.

British Columbia’s privacy regulations are among the most stringent in the country, and so there were some reservations among administrators about the ability of Dragon Medical One to comply. But because the Nuance solution is HITRUST CSF certified and is hosted in a Microsoft Azure HITRUST CSF-certified data center in Canada, those concerns were alleviated.

Enhanced provider efficiency and mobility drives Dragon Medical One adoption

“The initial implementation for Dragon Medical One began with 20 primary and community care doctors who are helping us test the workflows and voice commands,” says HIM project lead Jesse Priesman. “We continue to optimize the technology as we go.”

For example, Northern Health used the opportunity to improve structured documentation and implement standardized templates to overcome variances in documentation quality. “Because speech recognition is integrated directly into the electronic health record, it’s easier for physicians to provide richer documentation in a timely way,” says William Clifford, MD, Chief Medical Information Officer. “There’s no question; better, faster documentation supports better, safer care.”

Northern Health also built voice commands to create lab requisitions within the EHR, which eliminated 16 steps from their typical process. As a result of this type of efficiency gain, the early adopters were vocal about their experiences and helped spread the good word. “I’ve received a number of requests from physicians who are eager to start using the solution. I thought we’d need to have a greater sales effort internally to encourage its use, but they’re literally queuing up,” says Gregoire.

“We needed a solution that would help us de-silo the Canadian healthcare system, provide our workforce with an efficient way to accurately capture a patient’s complete story at the point-of-care, and provide an integrated approach across the care continuum—this is where Dragon Medical One was magic.”

Lisa Gregoire
Director of Health Information Management
Northern Health

Because so many physicians travel through the Northern Health facilities, Priesman believes that the portability and accessibility of speech recognition will help drive provider adoption to as high as 800 active users in the upcoming months. “They’re able to finish their notes whether they’re working in the hospital, in a clinic, or at home. The accessibility is key for us.” Gregoire is ready for the expected influx of new users. “There’s been really rapid uptake among our early adopters, and it is so slick that not a lot of training is required,” she says.

Patient care to feel impact of real-time documentation

Northern Health primary care physicians were the first to use Dragon Medical One because Gregoire and Priesman wanted to demonstrate the technology’s usefulness in the ambulatory environment. “When you look at the distribution of documents across the healthcare spectrum, that’s where Dragon Medical One is magic,” Gregoire says.

“The immediacy of these reports has made a huge difference in physicians’ confidence in our system and in their ability to direct patient care.” She goes on to say that palliative care is one area where the need for real-time patient notes is especially critical: “These are patients at the end of their lives, and the care they’re receiving changes by the minute. Their documentation must be available immediately.”

Jeff Hunter, Northern Health’s Chief Information Officer, says, “By making it as seamless as possible for our providers to complete their patient documentation, we better serve our providers, our patients, and our community.”

About Nuance Communications, Inc.

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