

# DRAGON MEDICAL HELPS WORKFLOW WORK BETTER AT WEST BAR SURGERY

## SITE PROFILE:

- One busy city centre site
- 12 doctors
- 18,000 patients treated each year
- 1,000 patient letters produced per month
- 11 users of Dragon Medical speech recognition since September 2012

## CHALLENGE:

- To maintain patient letter volume without additional secretarial support
- To automate the letter production workflow process
- To reduce the strain on secretarial team of the hospital

## RESULTS:

- Speech recognition replaces digital dictation
- Patient letters more detailed and comprehensive
- Secretarial role now diversified and more rewarding
- No delays or disruptions to patient letter production when secretaries are absent

Busy cities mean busy surgeries, and that's certainly true for West Bar Surgery, in Banbury near Oxford. West Bar comprises 12 doctors that treat approximately 18,000 patients a year, and its three secretaries and an assistant are responsible for issuing approximately 1,000 letters a month.

The surgery's Dr. Erfan Javaheri, explains: "With approximately 50 letters per day to complete, the high volume of output was putting the secretarial team under a great deal of pressure. This pressure was compounded during holiday periods, or in the event of a member of the secretarial team calling in sick. We needed to find an effective way to alleviate this pressure, and implement more efficient ways of working while streamlining the staffing costs."

Prior to deploying Dragon Medical from Nuance Healthcare, the surgery used a fairly typical workflow process for creating patient letters. The surgery's GPs would dictate conventional sound files, and its secretaries would transcribe the letter from the sound file. The letter would then be sent back to the GP to be reviewed and the amendments would be sent back to the secretary for correction, before going back to the GP for final sign off. The surgery was concerned that in the event of natural wastage, its remaining secretarial team would not be able to cope with the demand, and the quality of patient care could suffer as a result. At the same time, the surgery wanted to address the more pressing issue of how to reduce the workload on the secretaries, as Erfan states: "At times the workload was so intense that the secretaries were getting very stressed trying to complete their workloads. That is not the sort of environment that's pleasant for anyone to work in, so we had to find a better way to organise our workflow to benefit our secretarial team, and of course our patients."

Erfan had heard about Dragon Medical from other GPs, who spoke positively about their experiences of speech recognition technology. They praised the accuracy, and the efficiency gains it added to their patient letter workflow. Based on their favourable feedback, Erfan decided to assess Dragon Medical and its suitability for the surgery's needs.



## DRAGON MEDICAL IN ACTION

Initially, some of the surgery's GPs had some reservations about the accuracy of speech recognition technology, but having seen the latest version of Dragon Medical in action, they saw its value very quickly and how the medical dictionaries play an essential role in ensuring the accuracy of medical terms, in particular. After a successful evaluation period, the surgery is now using Dragon Medical integrated into authorised Nuance reseller GHG's TalkingPoint workflow software. Dragon Medical is being used for front-end speech recognition on the surgery's desktop PCs, and the surgery currently has 11 licences, procured through TalkingPoint. Dragon Medical is largely being used to create referral letters and letters to patients. There are two pathways open to the GPs. They can dictate the entire letter and send it directly to the secretary for posting, or dictate most of the letter and send it to the secretary to check it, and 'top and tail it' before posting it to the patient. Depending on each user's preference, patient letters are either dictated straight after a patient consultation or produced in batches at the end of the day.

Erfan and his colleagues are impressed with Dragon Medical's accuracy: "The medical dictionary is very impressive. The more we use it and train it, the better the accuracy gets. It appears to be working very well. On the whole we are happy with it, and would recommend it to other medical professionals."

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## WHEN PATIENT CARE MATTERS, DRAGON MEDICAL DELIVERS

Erfan is adamant that the introduction of Dragon Medical has achieved its primary goal, and has had a dramatic effect on the secretarial team's workload. Explaining how it helps, he states: "There are three key benefits to using Dragon Medical. First, patient letters are now sent out much more quickly. Although we haven't measured it, we believe that Time-To-Referral may have dropped due to the better communication speed driven by Dragon Medical and the TalkingPoint workflow. Second, members of the secretarial team are now working more in the capacity of a PA, and can focus on solving more complex problems during that day, rather than just transcribing letters. Day to day, they're able to take part in more varied and fulfilling tasks. Their health has improved too, because they are less stressed through knowing that patient letters are now getting sent out in time."

Erfan believes that there is a third benefit that directly and positively benefits the patients. "Because it is easier and quicker to talk than to type, patient letters created using Dragon Medical tend to be much more comprehensive and detailed. Previously, to keep up with the volume of correspondence, letters tended to be quite short and to the point. Their brevity could sometimes cause the recipient anxiety. Thanks to Dragon Medical, now we can issue more detailed letters to them. We are able to add in more reassurances about their condition or treatment, so as to alleviate their stress levels when they read the letter. This peace of mind is essential for patients."

Overall, Erfan and his colleagues are highly impressed by Dragon Medical: "I would certainly recommend it to other medical professionals. It is not only the accuracy and the medical dictionaries that impress, but also the ability to send emails and search the internet easily." More than anything, Dragon Medical has enabled the surgery to achieve its goals. He added: "The secretaries are far less stressed and are adding real value in their roles again, and the workflow process is much smoother. More than anything, the patients have benefitted through the creation of more detailed and more compassionate patient letters," states Erfan.

