Breaking new ground
Trust-wide implementation of MediSpeech powered by SpeechMagic ™

To achieve trust-wide report turnaround times of less than 48 hours, NHS Northumbria was first to set out for an entirely speech recognition-based dictation and transcription system. Requiring nothing less than a complete cultural change, the implementation team faced many challenges while relegating tape-based dictation to history. But knowing why they do, what they do, helped them stay focused and on track: "It's all about the patient," says Anne Wright, the trust's executive director for elective care and surgery.

"SpeechMagic is the foundation of information-driven medicine. It is at the heart of an IT infrastructure that allows us to deliver the perfect experience of care."

"You've got to be brave if you're aiming for a real change," says Anne, who started out as medical secretary herself. "The work of medical secretaries hasn't changed much from twenty years ago." And neither has their equipment. Despite the rise of digital technology, the healthcare sector seems to love its tapes. And the truth is, they served well for many years; but so have vinyl records. "In SpeechMagic I saw the technology that allowed me to think of a totally different way to produce documents," remembers Anne.

It's possible, (if you want it)

Jen Henderson, who's managing the speech recognition implementation, finds that bringing turnaround time to less than 48 hours is a huge undertaking. "People said it is impossible, but it's not." Pain management, where they have speech recognition for the four consultants, the specialists nurse and the psychologist as well as the secretaries, is one of the departments that has already met the target. Compared to a turnaround time of up to 13 weeks previously, it improved by 98%.

Front-line orthopaedics

90 secretaries and 87 authors throughout the hospital have so far been equipped with MediSpeech powered by SpeechMagic™. It'll be 325 authors in nine hospitals when the project is finished.

"We started with Orthopaedics," explains Jen. "It was hard and tough, but what we learned here made everything that followed a lot easier."

Dr. Simon Jones, the orthopaedics project lead, sees one of the big advantages in the fact that he can now work flexibly throughout the trust as files can be downloaded from his Philips Digital Pocket Memo everywhere. The files are transferred to the server farm in Newcastle, from where they are picked up by a secretary. "Files don't leave the clinic anymore, and urgent files can be easily priorotised," he says.

Denise Patterson, senior secretary in orthopaedics, saw her office being turned into a technology showcase at project start for others to see the technology working. After six weeks, the hype was so great that all secretaries wanted SpeechMagic. In a survey a couple of weeks later, all but two said that they would never return to the tape-based system. "The two girls missed the typing," smiles Denise. One secretary said that it is the first time ever that she felt in control of her job: "It's giving me control that I never had."

Denise finds she can manage the team much better; the transparent job list identifies areas of backlogs, so that work can be distributed equally. In-house secretaries have been pooled at Wansbeck General Hospital, working together very efficiently with their home-based colleagues; all of them share a central system for all nine hospitals.

NUANCE

Top 5 benefits of speech recognition

Compiled by Denise Patterson, Senior Secretary at Wansbeck General Hospital

Speed :: Transcription is twice as fast. Information is available when needed for treatment and GPs receive letters more quickly.

Management :: Workload immediately visible. Easier staff planning during holiday, sickness. Priority settings identify urgent dictations.

Accuracy :: Identical orthography of medical terms throughout all documents. No disruptions through lost or damaged tapes.

Transparency :: Job list identifies backlogs and free capacities. In-house and home-based staff on one central system.

Service :: Fast and reliable quality of patient care. Reduced waiting times for patients.

The perfect experience

Jen gives a simple example why the fast availability of information is so important: "If a consultant changes the patient medication and the GP receives the information twelve weeks later, we have a problem." That's why she is a full supporter of speech recognition, but points out the importance of doing things right: "In the beginning, it can slow you down. The secretaries listen to the dictation and automatically their fingers start to type. It is a new way of working to which they must get used to."

It's recommended to start with the senior secretary. She knows the movers in her department and she also knows those who are not so excited about new technologies. "If Denise and her consorts can prove it working, then the others can't say: 'Well but it doesn't work for me'." said Jen.

Essential for large-scale installations: Get your support networks in place before you start. "From supplier, to IT, to training – everybody should be briefed, prepared and ready to go. There are many things in the workflow that you can't think of in advance." At Northumbria the patient administration system (PAS) did not support dictations for deceased patients. "But whatever came up, G2 Speech and Nuance (formerly Philips Speech Recognition Systems) solved our problems fast. And we expect that one year down the line, we will be self-sufficient."

While Jen is still fully occupied with getting MediSpeech and SpeechMagic to everybody within the trust, Anne is already thinking of the next step: She wants to reengineer the whole secretarial and admin service,

envisioning a central point of contact for all patient relations, equipped with a state-of-the-art customer relationship management system. And she is heading for electronic medical records. "SpeechMagic is the foundation of information-driven medicine. It is at the heart of an IT infrastructure that allows us to deliver the perfect experience of care."

NUANCE COMMUNICATIONS

TRIESTERSTRASSE 64
A-1101 VIENNA

INFO.SPEECHMAGIC@NUANCE.COM
WWW.NUANCE.CO.UK

NUANCE