The primary care
pressure cooker

Overcoming the challenge of clinical
documentation in general practice

NUANCE

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It is not just
workload

The pressure of delivering quality health services to a growing and ageing UK population with long-term complex conditions compounded by constrained healthcare budgets has been well described. Nowhere has this pressure been felt more keenly than by GPs and practice teams on the frontline. But it is not just workload. GPs are faced with increasing complexity, mounting paper work, new ways of treating patients and a plethora of new tools and technologies.

This e-paper considers one element which consitutes a significant part of the workload for GPs and practice teams—clinical documentation. It presents the case and the evidence for general practices to consider making the investment in mature, powerful clinical speech recognition technologies that can transform the way that clinicians work—not harder, but smarter.

Primary care challenges

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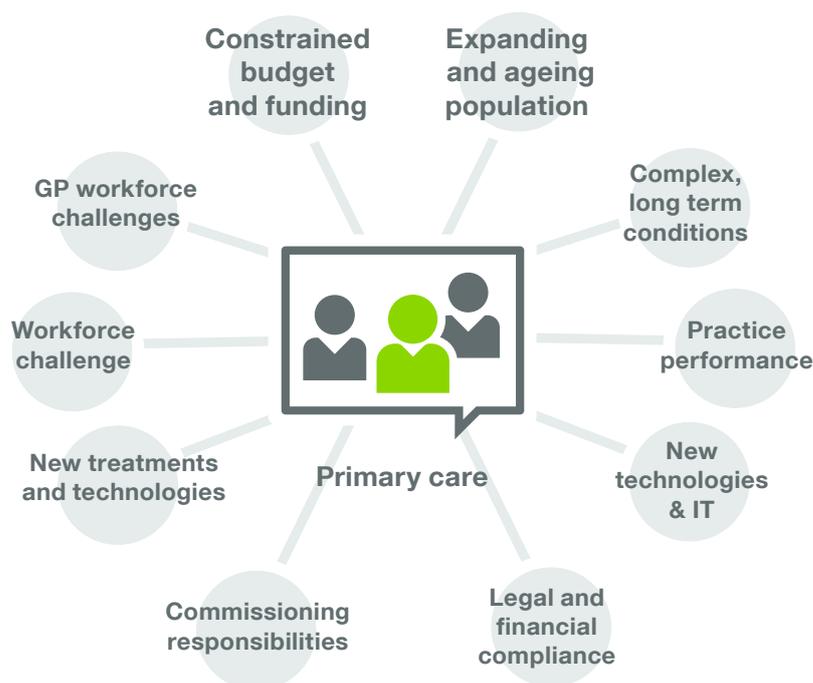
The clinical documentation imperative
High quality and accurate clinical documentation is vital for any health and social care economy

For the GP and practice team, complete, accurate, up-to-date records enable improved knowledge about the patient, resulting in better communication and more confident clinical decision making

For the GP and the practice team clinical documentation which is full, descriptive and contemporaneous is more likely to fulfil the expanding requirements of legal, financial and regulatory reporting within general practice

For patients it improves the experience and continuity of care and supports better outcomes and improved safety.
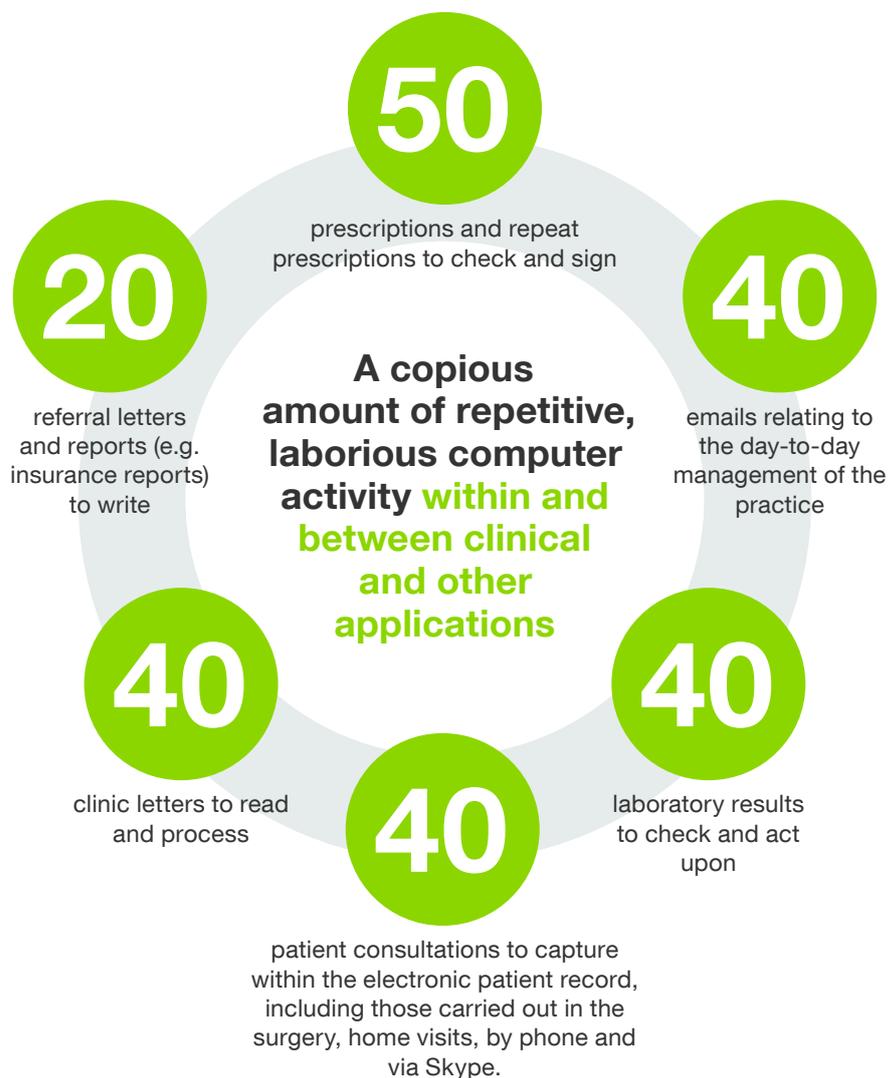
For the wider NHS, complete clinical documentation enables better data for accurate coding and the downstream aggregation of these for use in commissioning and budgeting.

Quality clinical documentation which records the complete patient story, appropriately anonymised, is a rich source of data for medical research for all of our future benefit.

Documentation exacts a heavy toll

The challenges relating to clinical documentation—accurately capturing the patient story, meeting medico-legal requirements, analysing performance data—can overwhelm a general practice. Consider the daily documentation workload faced by a typical GP[1]:

50 prescriptions and repeat prescriptions to check and sign

40 emails relating to the day-to-day management of the practice

40 laboratory results to check and act upon

40 patient consultations to capture within the electronic patient record, including those carried out in the surgery, home visits, by phone and via Skype.

40 clinic letters to read and process

20 referral letters and reports (e.g. insurance reports) to write

A copious amount of repetitive, laborious computer activity within and between clinical and other applications

1. Workload estimate from (i)"A Day In the Life Of a GP," The King's Fund, 5 May, 2016: https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/articles/gp-day-in-the-life and (ii) interviews carried out by Nuance in 2016 with 4 full time GPs in 4 different practices across England about their experiences of the nature and volume of clinical documentation.

The paperless NHS

Much of the clinical documentation in general practice is now held in digital rather than paper format and contained within the electronic patient record (EPR).

The use of technology to drive efficiency, and prime amongst these the adoption of EPRs in the UK, has been largely led by primary care. This is very much in support of the vision of the UK government that the NHS be paperless by 2020. This vision is underpinned by a series of guidance and frameworks published by NHS England:

Personalised Health and Care 2020: Using Data and Technology To Transform Outcomes For Patients and Citizens
This report concludes that: "One of the greatest opportunities of the 21st century is the potential to safely harness the power of the technology revolution, which has transformed our society, to meet the challenges of improving health and providing better, safer, sustainable care for all."

Five-Year Forward View
Setting out a five-year vision and action plan for NHS England, this guidance affirms that: "We will…raise our game on health technology, radically improving patients' experience of interacting with the NHS."

General Practice Five Year Forward View
In this document a set of practical steps for addressing the crisis facing General Practice in the UK, strongly recommends: "Greater use of technology to enhance patient care and experience, as well as streamlined practice processes:"

"As the NHS strives towards its vision of a paperless NHS by 2020, it is essential that clinicians are provided with solutions that not only digitise their reporting process, but also help them create reports in a more accurate and efficient way."

Simon Wallace, Chief Clinical Information Officer
at Nuance Communications

Technology barriers

Despite general practice leadership in adoption of technology to support delivery of quality and efficiency in healthcare services there are still many barriers to technology adoption as revealed in a survey of practice managers in August 2016:

The volume, the backlog, and the quality (completeness and accuracy) of patient and administrative documentation were all cited as key challenges by GP surgery practice managers

99%

of practice managers and doctors say that the creation and process-ing of patient documentation is a burden to their practice

70%

stated that funding is a key challenge when implementing new technology

48,5%

report that over half their patient documentation is paper versus electronic

40%

cited IT knowledge and experience as a barrier

33%

claimed that better technology would improve the paperwork workload in their practice.

Bridging the gap between GPs and technology

What if GPs and practice teams could continue to find a way to save time, reduce costs, improve patient care and free-up resources to focus on patient-centered care?

Nuance healthcare solutions simplify the way in which GPs, practice nurses and other healthcare professionals interact with technology freeing them from the burden of administration to re-focus time and attention back on the patient.

1. Turn voice into text three to four times faster than typing.

2. Enable capture of the patient story at the point of care

3. Speed navigation and eliminate multiple clicks and scrolling within the EPR and clinical systems

4. Streamline and simplify clinical documentation processes

5. Free-up back office and administration resources

"'Does speech recognition actually work?' 'Is it accurate?' 'Does it really save you time?' From personal experience, I can tell you that the answer to these three questions is an emphatic YES."

Dr. Ivan Camphor
Senior Partner
Heatherlands Medical Centre

A lifetime of support

As we've learned from our research of practice managers and by talking to our GP clients, many practices are instinctively anxious about taking on, implementing and learning new technology.

The Nuance network of certified Healthcare Connections partners have a wealth and depth of practical knowledge about healthcare and the systems and processes within general practice. Combining Nuance healthcare solutions and our partners' expert consultancy, customisation, training and support, we ensure that GPs and practice teams can stay focused on delivering health services to their patients. Meanwhile our partner expertise is effectively deployed to guarantee a fast return on the Nuance investment and deliver measurable benefit for the practice.

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Win back time

As well as improvements in the quality of clinical documentation UK studies and feedback from GPs have reported individual time savings of an hour or more per day.

In pure efficiency or cost saving terms that could translate into 5-6 extra patient appointments per GP per day.

Practices could use this added capacity in different ways. For example, it could help time manage the extra time a surgery may require to see the 'emergencies' or 'extras' added on the day. Some surgeries may want to use this extra capacity to actually reduce the need to employ a locum, thus freeing up funds to invest back into the practice.

From a patient-centered and work-life balance perspective this time saving presents the opportunity for the GP to:

– **Devote** more attention to each patient.
– **Attend** to the running of the practice: Meet with partners, practice meetings, address employee issues.
– **Dedicate** more mental energy to thinking (or thinking differently) about improving and growing the practice.
– **Go home** on time to relax and be with family.

"Stress levels have been reduced, we've made excellent cost savings, we're better able to cope with rising patient numbers, letter turnaround times are down, and, more than anything, our medical documentation is more complete and accurate than before."

Practice Manager Chris Watson,
Waterloo Medical Group

Capturing a more accurate and complete patient story in real time

Heatherlands Medical Centre, Upton, Wirral
With over 4,000 patients annually, Heatherlands struggled to create high-quality documentation. Secretaries spent hours typing reports dictated into analogue recording devices that were expensive to use and produced poor sound quality.

Determined to improve efficiency, Heatherlands switched to clinical speech recognition technology from Nuance. The result:

– **A more detailed**, descriptive and contemporaneous record of the patient story for better decision-making.
– **More efficient** conversion to digitized documentation
– **Better capture** of unstructured as well as structured data to provide context and rationale

Speech recognition also had the effect of putting patients back at the centre of care. Doctors spent less time typing notes and more time focused on patients, who in turn felt a renewed sense of importance and well-being.

In many cases, when dictation took place during the consultation, patients could hear what was being entered into their health record. As a result, they felt more connected to the process and intimately involved with their own care.

"As the documentation can now be prepared with the patient present, the consultation becomes a special and powerful interaction. It encourages the patient to participate, it reassures my patients that their report is created accurately and faithfully."

Dr. Ivan Camphor,
Senior Partner,

Speed up correspondence turnaround time to eliminate backlog

Wellspring Medical Practice, Killingworth, Newcastle upon Tyne
Because many of the doctors at Wellspring were not proficient typists, referral letters and general record keeping took far too long—made longer still by the need for secretarial editing. With 60 patient letters produced monthly, the delays were adding up.

The team implemented Dragon Medical voice recognition software from Nuance. The result:
– **Far less paper-flow**
– **No more backlog** of letters, referrals, medicals and the like
– **Faster document** turnaround time: 1-2 days, half a day less than previously

"Dragon Medical's accuracy makes the continuity of care a lot easier to achieve. It helps create letters that are coherent and can be read at a glance. Both medically and legally, I feel much more comfortable with the quality and accuracy of letters produced using Dragon Medical."

Liz Brittlebank,
Practice Manager

Free up administrative resources

Waterloo, Blyth, Northumberland
Blyth Medical has seen a steady increase in patients over the years, coupled with a rise in long-term health problems among the local population. With nine doctors and four secretaries, the team struggled with its workload even under the best of circumstances. During holidays or employee sick leave, productivity plummeted.

The most obvious solutions—outsourcing transcription or hiring new staff—were too expensive. Instead, the team opted for voice recognition from Nuance.

"Thanks to Dragon Medical we reduced the time for a 3-4 page report to 10 minutes, and saved approximately £15,000 in the first year"

Chris Watson,
Practice Manager

Conclusion

For general practitioners overwhelmed by clinical documentation, speech recognition technology holds the promise of:

– Support for better clinical decision making
– Improved communication within and between multi-disciplinary teams
– Achieving Quality and Outcome Framework requirements for the General Medical Service (GMS) Contract
– More evidence for Care Quality Commission (CQC) Practice audits
– Reduced risk in medico-legal challenges
– Better preparedness for online access to 'My Patient Record' 2020

By capturing the patient story more efficiently, speech recognition technology leads to better outcomes and a more consistent experience for patients. It also eases the administrative burden of documentation, freeing the healthcare team to devote time and energy to matters more essential to the practice and the well-being of its patients.

Technology can make a difference.
It is easy to get started!

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