

User Case



Holt Medical Practice Turns to Digital Dictation

PROBLEM

Holt Medical Practice is a thoroughly modern health practice with impressive facilities and has always been keen to try new technologies that have the potential for improving practice efficiency and, ultimately, care to its 14000 patients. With an ageing analogue dictation system, which was frequently breaking-down, Holt Medical Practice's IT Manager, Michael Munt, believed the time was right to look at alternative technologies.

At that time, dictation authors at Holt Medical Practice were using portable tape-based dictation devices to record many consultation notes before passing the tapes on to the three secretaries as and when they found the time. Furthermore, any dictation recorded at the branch offices had to wait until somebody was heading to the main Holt surgery where the three secretaries are all based. This inevitably led to time delays and with dealing with many urgent cases, these delays were a concern. Moreover, portable dictation devices were periodically being lost, adding yet more costs.

APPROACH

Following an impressive product demonstration, Michael felt that the Philips SpeechMike system was the ideal solution and set about a trial installation with three authors and one secretary.

Full roll-out of the SpeechMike system to all authors and secretaries followed very quickly in October 2003. From the outset, Munt set an ambitious target to throw out all tapes within 4 weeks. Following, initial scepticism from some, Holt Medical Practice did indeed abandon its tape system within four weeks of full installation – and nobody has looked back since!

Holt Medical Practice, supported by two branch surgeries, covers a large rural area in North Norfolk, taking in the market towns of Holt, Melton Constable and Blakeney as well as villages in between.

The practice employs nine GPs and other specialists all fully supported by 3 full-time secretaries.

KEY ISSUES

- How to improve turnaround time for urgent documentation
- How to reduce repair and maintenance costs of ageing analogue system
- How to improve efficiency of document production process



RESULTS

Michael Munt believes the system to be much superior to the old analogue system for a number of reasons “From day one, I particularly liked the SpeechMike because it was attached to the author’s PC – this way we avoid the replacement costs of lost portable machines. Equally, the tape costs have been eliminated and the new SpeechMike system is much more reliable, avoiding the cost and inconvenience of breakdowns”. He adds “Having said that, cost was not the overriding consideration for us, it’s also extremely important that any new technologies improve working practices for our users – and the SpeechMike solution certainly does. The system is also very easy to get to grips with which is extremely important with a number of locum doctors working at the practice from time to time”.

This view is backed up by the users themselves, who see the benefits of the system every day. Said practice GP, Dr. Franklin “The system, to date, has been fantastic. The sound quality is vastly superior and the system itself is very user-friendly. GPs and secretaries were up and running very quickly and minimal training was required.” Dr. Franklin adds “I would be the first to give criticism, but the SpeechMike system really has made everyone’s jobs easier. In particular, I like the ability to insert and modify dictation within a recording. I find this feature extremely useful.”

Arguably the secretaries, using the Philips Executive PC Transcription Kit, see the greatest benefits from the new system. Dictation is transferred electronically, so as soon as a doctor completes a dictation, the file is ready for transcription. This is particularly important for urgent jobs which are displayed as priority documents and can be turned around quickly. Previously, the secretaries would have to hunt through an entire tape just to find one priority recording. Worse still, sometimes a GP would record the fact that the dictation was urgent rather than explain this to the secretary who would have no idea. As a result, the tape was not processed any quicker. The Philips digital system all but eradicates this problem with urgent documents being highlighted on-screen immediately to the secretaries.

Equally, if a patient phones enquiring about the progress of a referral, the secretaries can check this immediately online and, if necessary, promote the recording for priority transcription. This ultimately saves the secretary time, with them no longer needing to hunt through tapes or files to find the details and/or recording.

Surgery secretary, Laura Haynes said “As soon as I first tried the Philips system, I wanted it. It is so easy to use and we all picked it up very quickly. The way the transcription system works is very familiar. The fact that urgent documents are highlighted on our screens has made our jobs so much easier. We now process letters more quickly and have a better idea of the workload and the status of all jobs.”

SUMMARY

The staff at Holt Medical Practice are extremely happy with the Philips system. The document production process has been improved significantly since the introduction of digital dictation technology and thanks to this, the service to patients has been made even better.

As the person who initiated the move to digital, Michael Munt is extremely pleased with the outcome. “The system has met all our needs and more. I think the SpeechMike system is a fantastic product. I would fully recommend the system to any medical practice.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- Increased productivity and ease of workload of secretaries
- Better workflow management with simple redistribution of workload
- Outstanding files easily located and re-prioritised
- Superior sound quality leading to greater efficiency

