
Good Hospital IT Infrastructure Key to Successful Implementation of Speech Recognition Systems



Hospital trusts Europe-wide are increasingly implementing speech recognition systems to reduce documentation costs, cut transcription backlogs and pave the way for electronic patient records. Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust was the first trust in the UK to introduce a speech recognition-based dictation and transcription system across 10 hospitals, and also cut document turnaround times from 13 weeks to 48 hours as a result.

G2 Speech's MediSpeech powered by SpeechMagic by Nuance was the back-end speech recognition system, which was implemented, in which the dictated sound file is transcribed digitally and a secretary then proofreads, edits and corrects this text. The solution was introduced in 29 departments across all ten NHS trust hospitals. After five years, 309 secretaries are successfully using the system to cater for dictations from 684 people, including senior and junior doctors.

Having a central database of digital dictation records has improved access to information for consultants and secretaries across the trust. With the old system, many part-time secretaries at community hospitals did not have direct access to previous dictations or correspondence. Transcription is also twice as fast now and the system has made management easier - workload is immediately visible, leading to easier staff planning during holiday and sickness. Furthermore, the system's transparency identifies any workload backlogs before they can build up, so that work can be distributed fairly.

However, according to Jen Henderson, Service Improvement Lead, Medicine and Emergency Care at the trust, who managed the project's implementation, getting infrastructure and support networks in place is essential before starting to implement a speech recognition system. From supplier to IT to training, everybody should be briefed, prepared and ready to go. It is also important to expose new users to the system 'little and often', so they can fully understand the whole speech recognition process under a familiar routine, as it takes time for the consultants to learn to dictate in a different way and for secretaries to learn to proof read rather than type.

Published on : Tue, 2 Nov 2010