Established over 40 years ago, Coquet Medical Practice is situated over two sites, three miles apart in North Northumberland. It has six partners and three GPs who treat just over 11,000 patients annually. Today, it is using Nuance Dragon Medical Practice Edition 2, the front end, real-time speech recognition solution, from Nuance Communications. It can dramatically reduce the amount of time GPs spend documenting care, by 30 minutes or more a day. Here, Lisa Scott, Practice Manager at Coquet Medical Practice, explains the drivers for the Practice’s speech based future.

What were you doing before you started using speech recognition software?

Previously, the doctors would dictate to voice recorders. The tapes would then be given to the secretaries for transcription, and the usual turnaround time – except in urgent cases – was about two days. This transcription was almost a full-time role for the secretaries. However, if a secretary based at one site was off, their tapes had to be collected and brought back to the other site for transcription. This wasn’t a very practical or efficient process, or a good use of time. Furthermore, the recorders were getting old and the audio quality from the tapes was deteriorating.

Frees up more time…

….to care at Coquet Medical Practice
Why did you start using it?

When faced with secretarial natural wastage through two retirements, we conducted a review of working practices. Our approach is always to ask ‘can we find a better way to do this?’ rather than just carry out a like-for-like replacement. Discussions with our IT Department led us to the subject of speech recognition software. We then met with other practices that are using the technology, to learn about their experiences, from training, installation to day-to-day benefits. We were impressed by what we saw and also their enthusiasm for the technology. The doctors and admin were convinced it was saving them time and they are now Dragon Medical converts. Our IT department recommended that we spoke to authorised Nuance reseller partner VoicePower about training and installation. VoicePower was excellent and provided lots of demos, ongoing training and support. It provided one-on-one training for each Dragon user of about three hours per session, as well as online training.

How have you encouraged staff to use it?

Some staff took less encouragement than others. Some members of the team had tried speech recognition in the past, but didn’t persevere with it. They were astonished at how much better the technology is now. Younger members of the team who have had more recent, positive experiences with speech technology, saw the benefits immediately and were keen to embrace the concept of swapping tape-based dictation for speech recognition. I, too, could see that it has improved a lot.

What difference did it make?

From a secretarial perspective, they now have more time to carry out other work tasks. With respect to patient letters, they take the transcribed text, put it in the appropriate letter format, proof-read it, then send the letters out. As we have turned them from typists into editors, letter turnaround times can now happen within a day - the process is so much more efficient. From a doctors’ and patients’ perspective, some doctors use Dragon Medical to create their consultation notes. Some are now doing this with the patient present, which reassures them that their consultation has been captured accurately, while also giving them the chance to make changes or correct a point if necessary.

Can you think of an example where speech recognition has led to a significant benefit?

Dragon makes work very accessible. By that I mean that the patient letters are there almost instantly, so secretaries can proof them straight away. Dragon has improved the information flow and it saves time. Secretaries can finish work quicker saving them a good few hours a week. It is a lot more effective than listening to crackling tapes.

What would you say have been the benefits for the practice overall?

The time-saving has been considerable, given the speed at which letters can be created and issued. Also, we have not had to budget for extra headcount to replace the secretaries that have retired, while our existing secretaries can now concentrate on other patient-facing tasks to provide an even better level of care and service.
Established in 2000, Heatherlands Medical Centre has a full healthcare team which includes three doctors. With an increasing requirement to record high quality, in-depth information on each patient consultation, attention was focused on the limitations of the practice’s analogue recording devices.

Problems included unacceptable sound quality, the recurring costs of dictation tapes and the length of time required for secretaries to type up letters and notes.

As a result, Heatherlands Partner Dr Ivan Camphor decided to investigate a completely different approach and look for a digital workflow solution.

Customer

- Heatherlands Medical Centre
- EMIS Web clinical system

Challenge

- Unacceptable sound quality
- Cost of analogue dictation tapes
- Turnaround time

Recording detailed patient data

Following advice from VoicePower, an independent specialist in digital dictation, speech recognition and workflow management solutions, Dr Camphor opted for the Philips SpeechMike Premium USB dictation microphone.

Results

- Crystal clear sound quality
- Time saved for GP and secretary
- Enhanced patient case

Best in-class recording

Revolutionises efficiency for GP...
Microphone selection

Designed to deliver amazing crystal clear sound quality, the microphone in the SpeechMike Premium incorporates several novel components. These ensure that virtually no background noises are recorded, as well as filtering out pops and hiss, even when dictating closely into the microphone. Outstanding speech recognition results are guaranteed – an important requirement for Dr Camphor.

The SpeechMike Premium is the world’s first stationary digital dictation tool with an integrated motion sensor. This detects when the device is placed on a table and automatically mutes the microphone until it is picked up again, allowing intuitive use during a patient consultation.

“It’s so much easier to multitask with this digital device – for example opening a report file from a patient profile just by using my SpeechMike Premium. I don’t know what I would do without it,” says Dr Camphor.

The SpeechMike Premium is ergonomically shaped, with an optimised control panel, and the antimicrobial housing and buttons protect against a wide range of microorganisms found in a clinical environment.

Continuity of care

The SpeechMike Premium is compatible with both Mac and Windows operating systems and integrates seamlessly with the practice’s EMIS Web clinical software. Dr Camphor is therefore able to open a Microsoft Word document from a patient profile using his SpeechMike Premium, making it quick and simple to refer to reports while dictating.

Using Dragon Medical software in conjunction with the SpeechMike Premium enables important details to be recorded during a consultation, without any need for typing. As well as saving the GP time it means that continuity of care can be improved as full information is available for nurses or clinicians when the patient revisits the surgery.

Time and money saved

Overall, the SpeechMike Premium and speech recognition software are saving time and money, as well as facilitating enhanced patient care at Heatherlands Medical Centre, and the Philips digital solution will be introduced throughout the surgery.
Background

The introduction of speech recognition at Ponteland Medical Group has helped to relieve the strain on secretaries and led to a fully digitised workflow for referral letters. Nuance’s speech recognition solution, implemented by local partner VoicePower, has impressed with its high performance and workflow tools.

Ponteland Medical Group is a General Practice with seven doctors in Newcastle upon Tyne. “We originally employed three secretaries. When one of them left, the team had to decide whether or not to hire a new secretary,” says IT and Information Manager Hilary Aldcroft.

They decided to try and get along with only two secretaries, but it quickly proved to be too much work and something had to be done. “This was when we took a closer look at speech recognition,” says Aldcroft.

A noticeable decline in workload…

…at Ponteland Medical Group, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Site Profile:

• Seven doctors
• EMIS clinical system

Challenge

• Secretary resource depleting

Results

• A noticeable decline in workload
• Data are available to secretaries irrespective of location
• A fully digital workflow for referral letters
• Easy to use / customised features
Better price and excellent reputation

Two providers were invited for a demonstration. One of them was VoicePower Ltd. Aldcroft: “A better price was one of the reasons we opted for VoicePower. But the excellent reputation of the software was also a factor.” The software was ready for use in February 2010. “Four months later, we can say that we have indeed witnessed a noticeable decline in workload. The key is to find your own routine with the software, and this probably differs from organisation to organisation.”

Finding your own routine

In Newcastle upon Tyne, the seven doctors write their referral letters at the end of each clinical session using Nuance’s speech recognition system. “It is really easy for them,” says Aldcroft. They only have to say “new patient letter” and the letter template comes up. For the document header, a patient number is needed. Then dictation can begin immediately. Once finished, the doctors save their documents in a letter folder on a shared drive so that they are accessible to the secretaries. “We have three of these folders to lend it some structure,” says Aldcroft. One folder is for urgent letters, another for routine letters and a third for occupational health letters.

Optimised workflow

To facilitate document management, VoicePower has developed various macros that work alongside the Nuance solution to optimise workflows according to Ponteland Medical Group’s specific needs. One macro is used to automatically save letters to the shared drive, for example. “Another macro shows the secretaries how many letters there are in each folder, so they can see straight away whether there are any new urgent letters.” Aldcroft says this macro has been particularly helpful in garnering broad acceptance for speech recognition among the staff. Once a new letter appears in the shared folders, secretaries start working on the final referral document. “They merge the dictation with information from the clinical systems, for example medical history or current medication.” After a final check by the doctors, the letter is then ready to be sent.

Ponteland Medical Group is a multi-site facility. Thanks to the shared drive, data from different facilities are available to secretaries wherever they are.

“We are using speech recognition at two out of three facilities at the moment. For the third facility, the network connection is not powerful enough. We are hoping that this will improve at some time in the future. If this is the case, we will certainly think about using speech recognition in the third facility as well.”

Hilary Aldcroft
IT and Information Manager
Background

Founded almost 60 years ago, Killingworth-based Wellspring Medical Practice attends to the medical needs of almost five and a half thousand patients.

An experienced team comprising doctors, nurses, practice and healthcare professionals, work together to provide a range of services as wide and diverse as general health checks, baby clinics, travel immunisations and health advice, diabetic clinics, psychology, counselling and chronic disease management.

Accuracy is vital

It is widely acknowledged that accurate patient records are central to patients receiving precise, timely and appropriate medical treatment. Therefore capturing data accurately is essential. With this in mind, Wellspring Medical Practice decided that its process for creating general practice records could be improved by offering its doctors the ability to dictate them using speech recognition technology, rather than type them — a process that resulted in records of varying quality, because the doctors were not professional typists. Their lack of typing proficiency caused delays in the creation of both referral letters and general practice records while typing them up was a time-consuming task for the secretary.

Time saved, accuracy up…

… and errors down at Wellspring Medical Practice, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Site Profile:
- Five doctors, 5,500 patients
- 60 patient letters produced per month
- TPP SystmOne clinical system

Challenge
- Doctors not proficient at typing
- Reports slow and inaccurate
- Strain on secretarial team to correct content

Results
- Accurate, easy and quick capture of patient notes and clinical documents
- Patient letters more detailed and comprehensive
- Secretaries save half a day
Expert advice

A meeting with Nuance Communications Healthcare Connections partner, VoicePower Ltd, introduced the surgery to Dragon Medical interfaced with TPP’s SystmOne clinical software, which allows patient information to be shared electronically. Dragon Medical is Nuance’s front-end, real-time, desktop, speech recognition software. Developed to enable doctors to conveniently and efficiently generate clinical documentation and navigate clinical systems, Dragon Medical maximises healthcare professionals’ productivity and performance, enabling them to do more with less, improve information accuracy and raise the quality of service and care delivered to patients. With Dragon Medical, clinical letters can be dictated directly, up to three times faster than typing, helping to meet targets to get discharge letters to patients within 24 hours. With accurate reporting central to delivering optimised patient care, Dragon Medical’s accuracy rates of up to 99% ensure clear, accurate and timely clinical letters. To ensure consistent accuracy, Dragon Medical has been optimised for non-native speakers too, while new medical vocabularies cover almost 80 specialities and sub-specialities.

Dragon Medical – a speech based solution

Already open to the concept and benefits of speech recognition, Wellspring Medical Practice heard VoicePower explain how, when used as front-end speech recognition on the surgery’s desktop PCs, Dragon Medical could not only help increase the accuracy of the general practice records, but — thanks to people speaking faster than they type — also increase the detail included, to provide a more comprehensive practice record. This contributes to optimising the quality of healthcare for patients. VoicePower also explained that Dragon Medical could be personalised to the needs of each user, showing that the technology fits around them, rather than the other way around. This flexibility encourages acceptance, accelerates deployment and doesn’t impact the doctor’s workflow, or working practices. Convinced that VoicePower presented a compelling case for Dragon Medical, a successful pilot trial was conducted before Wellspring Medical Practice decided it would deploy the software. VoicePower then further assisted with individual training, personalising Dragon Medical to each user’s requirements with specific macros to speed up tasks, such as adding standardised or generic text to a document.

Time saved, accuracy up, errors down

The benefits of using Dragon Medical were apparent early on, according to Liz Brittlebank, Practice Manager at Wellspring Medical Practice. “Not all of the doctors are good typists. Dragon Medical presents them with an alternative way to create general practice records without typing.” Additionally, Dragon Medical enables the GPs to create the patient record at a time convenient for them and, because the quality and accuracy is far better using Dragon Medical, the secretaries spend less time editing. Once they have received the referral letter, their time is now mainly spent formatting the document rather than editing it. The impact on their productivity has been considerable with Liz stating they save ‘approximately half a day’ since deploying Dragon Medical, with letters being turned around in between one and two days. There is a further benefit that contributes to better patient outcomes, as Liz explains. “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.”

The overall satisfaction with Dragon Medical has been bolstered further, as Liz states. “Dragon Medical is much more flexible that we initially realised. The doctors are impressed that it can be used to create and send emails and conduct research online in addition to creating text. Additionally, it has integrated really well into our medical record workflow process.”

Wellspring Medical Practice has been so impressed with Dragon Medical that not only has it recommended it to other surgeries, it has invited other medical professionals over to see it in action, explaining the benefits it has delivered and how these can filter back into improved patient care — the objective of all medical professionals, wherever they are based.
Turnaround times reduced, money and time saved...

...at Whetstone Medical Centre, Birkenhead

Site Profile:
- Six doctors, Wirral CCG
- VoicePower client since 2013
- EMIS Web

Challenge
- Inefficient dictation system
- Strain on secretarial resources
- Necessity to reduce turnaround times

Results
- Faster referral letter generation
- Reduced turnaround times
- Secretarial time freed up to help in other departments
- Money saved

Background

Like many GP practices, Whetstone Medical Practice in Birkenhead was facing increasing workloads alongside the ever present need to cut costs and improve patient care. In February 2013, the practice paid focus to its inefficient dictation system and began researching possible replacements as a way of addressing some of the issues faced.

A fellow Wirral GP and existing VoicePower Ltd client recommended VoicePower to the practice. VoicePower Ltd is a Nuance Healthcare, Olympus and Philips Partner and is a specialist in implementing speech recognition technologies within primary and secondary care.

Consultancy

Dr Nicolas Shah and Practice Manager Anita Jones, met with Vicky Humberstone from VoicePower Ltd to explore the alternatives further. They explained their current working practices and what they hoped to achieve by employing something new. The doctors had expressed their wish to have a system that could be used for consultations, emails and Microsoft Word templates. VoicePower was able to demonstrate the solutions which would best suit their needs and advise on the most effective means of implementing a new system.
The Solution
Having seen the options on offer and considered the advantages to be found from each, the site opted for speech recognition. Following the recommendations VoicePower made, this consisted of; Dragon Medical 11, Philips SpeechMike handheld devices and full training with software assurance.

Installation
Installation commenced in April 2013 and each GP received two half-day training sessions during which time they were shown how to use the solution and get the best from the new technology. Training included a focus on template completion, email and dictation within and automation of their EMIS clinical system.
VoicePower supplied a suite of bespoke Dragon voice commands which have been created to control EMIS. This is supplied as standard with VoicePower’s professional services.

Ongoing support
Follow up calls and remote sessions were made by VoicePower to ensure a smooth transition following training and the continual support package in place enabled any queries or questions raised to be resolved and answered immediately.

VoicePower programmed buttons on the Philips SpeechMikes for ease of use and quick access to regularly used features. This further enhanced the speed and ease with which GPs could access and create reports.

VoicePower also equipped the practice with the Notifier utility, which provides a link between the GP (dictator) and the secretarial team, by highlighting once new dictations are produced. Work types - including Urgent, Routine, Referral and Miscellaneous - were also established to aid the prioritisation and organisation of work.

Within a very short space of time the practice found it had been able to cast aside the inefficient and dated dictation system previously in place and to equip the team with a fast and effective workflow system reaping great benefits for the GPs, administrators and patients alike. Using Dragon, reports and notes could be dictated by the GP resulting in a finished document rather than a laborious checking and amending reporting loop.

Secretaries could simply proof read and send communication, meaning turnaround times had been immediately reduced. The administration team, freed from the ties of dictation queues, were able to spend more time on other tasks and patients were able to receive paperwork more quickly. Anita Jones explains: “We have found that since using the system it has speeded up referral letters and is also a tidier and more efficient system than our old Dictaphones. The system has enabled us to free up secretarial time to assist in other departments thus saving the practice money. Any hiccups that we experienced when initially using the system were sorted with a simple phone call or email.”

Since the original installation, the site has upgraded to Dragon Medical Practice 2 Edition to ensure it keeps abreast of the technology and all it has to offer. Through the software assurance cover they hold they are now also entitled to Dragon Medical Practice Edition 3 which is the latest release of the software.

Client testimonial
“Just wanted to say how pleased we have been with the voice recognition system. The training in particular was excellent. The Partners and staff would all happily recommend your service to any interested party.” Anita Jones, Practice Manager

See the system in action
See the options below to watch Dr Nicolas Shah using the Dragon speech recognition software, EMIS Web and VoicePower’s Notifier solution.

Scan the QR code below

Find https://youtu.be/xNiTNfHEbl4
Visit the VoicePower Ltd YouTube channel - VoicePowerLtd
https://www.youtube.com/user/VoicePowerLtd
Cost savings & healthy work-life…
…balance at Waterloo Medical Group

Site Profile:
- Eight doctors
- 14,300 patients
- EMIS Web

Challenge
- Rising patient numbers
- Need to strike a healthier work-life balance for its team
- Need to reduce administration cost

Solution
- Dragon Medical speech recognition solution
- Training and Support from Nuance Healthcare
  Connections Partner – VoicePower Ltd

Results
- Savings of up to £15,000 within 12 months
- Reduced stress across the whole team
- Faster turnaround times and higher quality clinical documentation

Background - More patients, more pressure

Founded over 30 years ago to serve citizens near the Port of Blyth, the practice has seen its patient numbers increase steadily from 13,700 to 14,300. The decline of the area’s core industries – which ranged from shipbuilding to fishing - has affected its citizens, driving long-term health issues which have placed further demand on the practice’s team of nine doctors and four secretaries across two sites.

“From our doctors to our secretaries, we needed to be more efficient in order to cope with the rising patient numbers and the extra pressure on the team here” explained Practice Manager Chris Watson.

A particular problem he outlined related to secretarial cover. “With a team of four secretaries, referral letters could be turned around in 72hrs. However, in the event of secretarial sick leave or over the holiday period, productivity could plummet such that turnaround time of letters could take up to nine days. This situation was not acceptable and we had to address it; but in a cost effective way.” Chris and his team dismissed the typical options – to outsource transcription or to hire-in agency staff - when support was needed.

“Staffing costs are our biggest overheads, and both of these options were too expensive” Chris stated.

“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.”

Chris Watson, Practice Manager

Save Time  •  Save Money  •  Be Productive
A solution to healthcare challenges
The alternative option – speech recognition - was one that some members of the team were familiar with and that others were keen to try, as Chris explained: “A few of the doctors suggested looking at speech recognition. Some of them had tried the technology many years ago and we thought it was time that we looked at it again to see how it had progressed and whether it could help us achieve our goals.”

Helping medical professionals to achieve their goals is something that Dragon Medical has been achieving for many years. Offering high accuracy rates out-of-the-box and capable of capturing the patient story three times faster using voice than by typing, Dragon Medical dramatically reduces the time clinicians spend documenting care – 30-60 minutes or more per day, according to a number of studies.

Demonstrating the future way of working
A meeting with Nuance Communication’s authorised Healthcare Connections partner, VoicePower Ltd, lead to an introduction to Dragon Medical. “VoicePower was excellent. It delivered a presentation explaining the benefits of speech recognition, then the team took the time to listen to our challenges, our experiences with speech recognition to date and the efficiency objectives we had in mind.” He added: “During the demonstration, we were stunned by Dragon Medical’s speed and accuracy and its ability to cope effortlessly with the range of broad accents we have at the practice.

Thanks to VoicePower’s excellent training and ongoing support, we were using Dragon Medical within an hour. So, very little time investment was needed to make the move to speech recognition. It was done without any disruption to patient services.”

Every day speech recognition impresses
Day to day, Dragon Medical has impressed Chris and his team with its ease of use and accuracy: “The speed and accuracy is superb. It has helped us reduce our turnaround times considerably. It also comes into its own when writing long or detailed reports. It used to take over 30 minutes to complete a three or four page report. Thanks to Dragon Medical, that’s down to less than 10 minutes per report. Dragon Medical is equally useful for essential practice admin tasks such as quickly documenting meeting minutes.”

Thanks to the medical vocabulary – which covers over 60 medical specialties and subspecialties in healthcare – the team at Waterloo can be assured of its accuracy, and they have come to trust it. “We had one secretarial cover come in who claimed to have medical experience. She couldn’t actually understand any of the medical terminology used by the GPs. We don’t have this problem – or expense - with Dragon Medical,” Chris added.

With the efficiency gains Dragon Medical has delivered, Chris says the workload on the team now using it have been reduced to the point that he’s not had to worry about cover in the event of secretarial sickness or leave. “Because Dragon Medical is so efficient, we can hold our own in the event of staff absence. I know it can scale easily if we’re a team member down. Because of that, we’ve saved approximately £15,000 by not having to outsource work or hire-in cover. That’s a fantastic return on investment (ROI) and we can share those savings with our team. At a time of pay-freezes across practices, thanks to Dragon Medical we’re in a position to offer our staff a pay-rise and get our staffing costs under control.”

Savings across the board
The greatest saving realised by using Dragon Medical isn’t necessarily financial, as Chris explains: “Dragon Medical helps ease the pressure on GPs.” He supports this point by explaining that “…the doctors receive a lot of letters each day and about 15% of them require a response. We now have a process in place whereby the secretaries review the incoming mail to determine whether they need to be seen by the doctor or not. Those letters that need replying to can be responded to quickly using Dragon Medical, which saves doctor’s time and takes away a lot of pressure.”

Attractive to current staff & new recruits
Chris also believes Dragon Medical is a powerful recruitment tool. “General Practices are stressful environments because of the workload. While the GPs accept that situation, unsurprisingly, many still want to find a good work-life balance. We believe we can offer them that because we have adopted speech recognition, and we make a point of explaining that we’re a progressive, forward thinking practice that’s embraced the technology as a way of better controlling workloads.”

For a relatively small investment, Chris is adamant that Dragon Medical has had a positive impact at the practice.
Background

Medical practice has changed considerably since Dr Devine & Partners was founded in the late 1800s in Stockport, in the north west of England. Despite the passage of time and a name change to Bramhall Park Medical Centre to better reflect the surgery’s location, one thing has remained consistent over the years: its focus on maintaining and delivering high standards of patient care. This has been achieved by adopting medical best practice, and implementing the latest technological solutions to continually improve standards of treatment.

Today, the Bramhall Park Medical Centre is located on two sites. The main surgery is still in Bramhall, with an additional surgery located in Shaw Heath. The few miles that separate the surgeries are connected by a centralised computer system, which enables the surgery’s ten doctors and its practice support team to serve its 12,900 patients, during 50,000 consultations annually. Thanks to the surgery’s reputation for treatment excellence, it is experiencing an increase in patient numbers, of up to 400 per annum. This growth – combined with a headcount reduction through a retirement – encouraged the surgery to assess the best way to optimise its medical document workflow process, to simultaneously accommodate an increase in patients without impacting the doctors’ productivity, or the levels of patient care they deliver.
Speech at the heart of progress

In keeping with its forward thinking philosophy, most recently the surgery introduced Dragon Medical from Nuance following a consultation process with VoicePower Ltd, a Nuance Healthcare Connections Partner. Dragon Medical is Nuance’s popular, real-time, desktop speech recognition software, used by doctors and surgeries globally for the faster, more efficient and cost effective creation of clinical documentation. By speeding up this process, Dragon Medical typically leaves doctors with more time for their patients.

Developed to enable doctors to conveniently and efficiently generate clinical letters and navigate clinical systems, Dragon Medical maximises healthcare professionals’ productivity and performance, enabling them to do more with less, to save time, reduce costs, improve information accuracy and raise the quality of service and care delivered to patients. With Dragon Medical, clinical letters can be dictated directly, up to three times faster than typing, which helps to meet targets to get discharge letters to patients within 24 hours. With accurate reporting central to delivering optimised patient care, Dragon Medical’s accuracy rates of up to 99% ensure clear, accurate, and timely clinical letters. To ensure consistent accuracy, Dragon Medical has been optimised for non-native speakers too, while new medical vocabularies cover almost 80 specialities and sub-specialities.

Helping surgeries do more with less

One measure the surgery took to accommodate the growth in patient numbers - and to even out the peaks and troughs of appointment booking during the day - was to overhaul its appointment booking system. It introduced a booking service that is accessible 24hrs a day, giving its patients more flexibility over when they book appointments.

With that challenge addressed, the surgery then turned its attention to how best to create patient letters and referrals. Although it had already made an investment in digital dictation solutions, this alone would not be enough to address the issue of a smaller secretarial team dealing with an increase in medical documentation. In response to this challenge – and based on his personal experiences - one of the surgery’s doctors proposed that it considered assessing Dragon Medical.

Training for better results

The surgery arranged a consultation and demonstration of the software via VoicePower. Impressed by Dragon Medical’s accuracy and ease of use following the consultation, the surgery purchased licences for its ten doctors along with installation, customisation and training through VoicePower. Kath Wilkinson, Practice Manager said:

“VoicePower demonstrated Dragon Medical to the surgery’s doctors, explaining the main features and how Dragon Medical can be used for the creation of patient letters and referrals. After the initial set-up and training, VoicePower returned to conduct a second round of training, tailored to the needs of each doctor. One of the areas that VoicePower explained in greater detail was the ability to create standard letter templates, or letter templates that related to specific medical conditions, such as diabetes for instance.”

Today, doctors at the surgery dictate patient letters or referrals after a consultation. As part of a quality control process, the letters are then sent to secretaries to be checked. This removes the time consuming requirement for secretaries to transcribe the entire letter from an audio file recording, then send it back to the doctor for proof-reading and factual accuracy.

“Dragon Medical has helped accelerate the letter turnaround time”, states Kath, “Because the bulk of the letter creation is now done quickly by the doctor.”

By removing the need for the secretary to transcribe the entire digital dictation voice file, Dragon Medical speech recognition software has also smoothed out another process at the surgery. Previously the transcription process was prone to disruption if one of the secretaries was absent either through illness or holiday. Using Dragon Medical, the letters are now transcribed on site in real-time, with secretaries now acting as editors, rather than writers. This ensures that the speed of the transcription process is now consistent and less susceptible to delays or set-backs.
Delivering success with VoicePower’s support

Kath is keen to stress that the surgery’s success to date with Dragon Medical can be attributed to the support from VoicePower. As well as the accuracy inherent in Dragon Medical, she states that consulting with an authorised partner that’s both experienced in speech recognition technology and understands the specific needs of the healthcare industry, is essential for the delivery of a comprehensive – and tailored - training programme, and to ensure a smooth deployment.

Since deploying Dragon Medical, Kath points to three noticeable benefits. She said:

“Thanks to the Dragon Medical solution supplied by VoicePower, we have not had to replace headcount lost through natural wastage, so the surgery has made an appreciable cost saving there. Patient letters and referrals are now turned around far more quickly, so we’re seeing a real increase in productivity. The letter templates relating to common ailments also play a role in helping to drive productivity too.”

Would Kath recommend it to other surgeries?

“For the efficiency gains, and cost savings we have made using Dragon Medical, I would definitely say yes!”