

Documentation capture, Healthcare AI

How the pandemic is still affecting clinicians' wellbeing—and where AI-powered speech recognition can help

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Healthcare professionals throughout Australia are still experiencing the pressure from the past two years—and it's having a detrimental effect on clinicians' wellbeing. In this article, we dig into the impact of the pandemic, how it's affecting clinicians, and how Dragon Medical One, a conversational AI documentation companion solution, lightens some of the pressure that infringes on their wellbeing.

There's no doubt the pandemic put immense pressure on every healthcare organisation, growing the workloads of already-busy clinicians.

In some cases, the pressure pushed clinicians to the state of burnout for the first time in their careers. [The 2022 International Council of Nurses study](#) reported that nurses "have been at greater risk, and are more likely to report burnout and intention to leave, than other health workers". Despite the pandemic loosening its grip on healthcare systems over the past year, there's still a lasting impact on the work and wellbeing of clinicians throughout Australia.

Recently, we've been exploring the impact of the market challenges on healthcare organisations and on clinicians, what healthcare leaders can do to protect the wellbeing of their teams, and where AI-powered speech recognition can help. Here are some of the key points we've identified.

The backlog of medical and surgical procedures is causing strain on clinicians

One of the most significant lasting effects from the pandemic is the major backlog of medical procedures and consultations.

During the pandemic, non-urgent healthcare procedures were scaled back to prioritise urgent care related to COVID-19. Many countries—including Australia—put in policies to cancel non-urgent elective surgeries and reassign resources to face the pandemic wave.

Now, care teams are trying to catch up with this backlog of cancelled and postponed procedures alongside their ever-growing list of new appointments and surgeries. In Australia, McKell Institute reports that [overdue elective surgeries are set to triple after the pandemic backlog](#)—creating a major patient influx.

This backlog of appointments has also created a greater pressure to deliver high-quality care to patients at a much faster rate. That means less time spent in consultations, more patient throughput every day and inevitably, greater documentation workloads outside of those consultations.

As this pressure scales, it will continue to have a more damaging effect on clinicians' wellbeing and their ability to serve patients effectively. Other effects of the pandemic are only making the problem worse.

The workforce shortage crisis is damaging clinician wellbeing

The pressure to deliver high-quality healthcare faster has been increased even further by the workforce shortage currently being experienced by healthcare organisations throughout Australia. Recent reports estimate that [in nursing alone, Australia will have a shortage of more than 100,000 professionals by 2025](#).

For the clinicians still in the profession today, this means that they don't just have to serve patients with less time, they also have fewer team members to share the workload. Too often, pressures like this directly affect clinicians' work/life balance, forcing many to flex their working hours to meet workload demands, work overtime and sacrifice their breaks.

Ultimately, this quickly translates to negative effects on clinicians' wellbeing. [A recent poll](#) of more than 10,000 Australian healthcare professionals revealed 61% experienced anxiety during the pandemic, while 58% and 28% experienced burnout and depression.

These challenges are forcing healthcare organisations to consider where they can support clinicians to lighten their workloads and help mitigate the residual effects from the pandemic. And for many, documentation is a prime target.

Supporting clinician wellbeing and reducing clinical documentation workloads with conversational AI

Talking to clinicians over the past year, it became clear that documentation is one of the key contributors to exhaustion and burnout among healthcare professionals—making it an ideal area to target. Documentation scales as patient volumes rise, and only becomes a bigger burden as workforces continue to shrink.

Fortunately, this is one area where technology can help. AI-powered speech recognition solution, [Dragon Medical One](#) can assist clinicians to tackle their documentation faster throughout their day, and remove the burden of completing tasks in their personal time. Because we speak much faster than we type, Dragon Medical One helps reducing the time spent to create accurate documents, from admission and ward round notes to discharge and outpatient letters.

The advantage of using [Dragon Medical One](#) is better quality of notes and their faster availability which impacts discharge summaries and the handover to the GP and faster, readily available patient management plans.

"Dragon Medical One gave them [clinicians] the ability to structure their day, be in command again. I can go home and feel I've done everything possible for the patient today and I can go and spend some time with my family and switch off."

Pieter Nel, Chief Digital Director Medical Services, Mackay Hospital, Australia

Dragon Medical One users have commended the solution on its ability to enhance clinicians' wellbeing and the safety, quality, and efficiency of patient care. This is particularly due to the time savings, the real-time availability of data and the level of detail as well as the structure of the documentation it enables. This, in turn, supports a better-connected patient journey and improved health outcomes.

"If we're happier with our work performance we're going to reduce burnout – if we are able to actually free up time to have lunch, to have coffee, to go home on time – again it's going to reduce burnout".

Dr Andrew Brier, FACEM, MBBS, Staff Specialist, Emergency Physician

See how you can support your clinicians

Finding ways to support clinicians' wellbeing in a stressful working environment can feel like a monumental challenge. But healthcare organisations across Australia—and the rest of the world—are making progress.

Our recent [white paper](#) takes a deep dive into the challenges around clinician wellbeing following the pandemic, and explores how Dragon Medical One, conversational AI, is supporting clinician wellbeing by improving documentation workflows.. You'll get an insight into how other regions are tackling the same wellbeing challenges, and guidance on where you can start supporting your clinicians right away.

Tags: [Dragon Medical One](#), [Burnout](#)

More Information

Get the whitepaper

Get the white paper to better understand the clinician wellbeing challenge across Australia and identify where you can start supporting your teams today.

[Download](#)



About Dr. Simon Wallace

Dr. Simon Wallace is the Chief Clinical Information Officer (CCIO) of Nuance's Healthcare division in the UK and Ireland. Simon has worked as a GP, hospital and public health doctor in Brighton and London. His interest in health informatics began in the 90s when he spent a year at the King's Fund investigating the impact of the internet on shared decision making between patients and their healthcare professional. For the past 15 years, he has worked for a range of organisations including Bupa, Dr Foster, Cerner Corporation and GSK across a range of technologies which include electronic patient records, telemedicine, mobile health and lifestyle devices. Simon has a keen interest in the voluntary sector, recently completing a 7 year term as a Trustee for Fitzrovia Youth in Action, a children and young people's charity based in London.



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