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Documentation capture, Healthcare AI

Can speech recognition be a magic bullet for the digitisation of Australia healthcare?

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Australia's national digital health agency has just published a comprehensive national digital health strategy. Does Australia healthcare have anything to learn from the UK NHS' investment and deployment of digital technology?

Australia digital health from the front line

Australia has published a comprehensive national digital health strategy with seven strategic priority outcomes spearheading the drive to meet both the clinical and financial challenges of delivering and sustaining a complex 21st century healthcare system.

Tim Kelsey, once of NHS fame, now Chief Executive of the Australia Digital Health Agency, presenting at a recent Cerner Australia Regional User Group which I attended, took us on a journey where patients and their healthcare providers will have access to 'My Health Record', a digital health record for a patient that contains a summary of their health information. His enthusiasm, vision and sheer determination to make this a reality in Australia despite unfortunate road blocks in the UK, will be a real win for the citizens of Australia.

Afterward we all discussed the strategy and shared real-life, day-to-day experiences of delivering a digital infrastructure, whilst striving to make a real difference to their healthcare organisations. The meeting was peppered with inspiring examples of EPR digital innovations that have made a measurable difference to the quality of patient care.

Clinical speech recognition delivers measurable outcomes

Like other countries across the world, healthcare in Australia has reams of clinical documentation – recent estimates for 2015-16 suggest that there were 10.6 million discharge summaries, 28 million outpatient reports/letters and 2.2 million procedure notes. But is it in a digital format that is useful? As I have observed in previous blogs, these EPR tools only work if their engine room is fueled with quality data. Speech recognition is a key ingredient and 'magic bullet' to overcome the data entry burden that the EPR can place upon clinicians.

As I mingled with a very 'can do' group of clinicians at the Cerner Australian RUG and shared some of our experiences with speech recognition in the NHS, they 'got it' and wanted to 'just get on with it'.

They were intrigued with recent NHS case studies from across primary and secondary care, in a wide range of specialties, used not just by doctors, but nurses and other allied health professionals. Their enthusiasm was heightened with headline benefits such as:

- Savings of up to 40% in documentation time in the Emergency Department
- Accelerated document turnaround times reducing delays in outpatient letters from weeks to days
- Removal of backlogs in histopathology

As the event drew to a close, it was clear to me that the need for real time, quality clinical information, whether in Australia or in the UK, requires an industrial strength tool such as speech recognition that I have found is the natural bed-fellow to keep pace with the never-ending progress of modern medicine.

Tags: Future of healthcare, Clinical documentation, Digital healthcare

More Information

Get ahead on the digital journey

Read more about speech recognition outcomes in the NHS and learn how to benefit from the lessons learnt.

Learn more

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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