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Healthcare AI
UK Health Tech Predictions 2019

Dr. Simon Wallace | Chief Clinical Information Officer (CCIO), Nuance Healthcare UK and Ireland

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Nuance healthcare international CCIO Simon Wallace shares his thoughts on health tech innovations and expectations for 2019

What would be your new year's resolution for the health tech industry for 2019?

This year, the NHS must demonstrate how it can encourage a culture shift to ensure technology is properly being used to boost efficiency, improve patient care and reduce stress and burnout seen across the healthcare profession. To achieve this, it is important that budget allocated to digital health is utilised in this way, and not clawed back to fund other reactive needs, such as winter pressure. Underpinned by secure advances in cloud computing, global digital exemplar Trusts – and their fast followers – must demonstrate they are the world leaders in harnessing digital technology to improve the delivery of patient care.

What are you most excited to see in health tech this year?

I'm most excited by the potential of achieving a single summary view of each patient's healthcare record – with key pertinent summary details for healthcare professionals to see – whatever part of the journey the patient is on. There have been several attempts at achieving this in the past, but we have the technology available today to make it happen.

Alongside this, it will be easier for patients to access and consult with their healthcare practitioner – for example, via video consultations – so they can get access to care and treatment faster, at a time of their convenience and at less expense.

All of this requires high quality clinical documentation, and that's where technology such as speech recognition comes in – enabling clinicians to compile records using just their voice to capture the patient story completely and accurately at the point of care.

What are some of the biggest challenges facing health tech this year?

The NHS will always be under pressure. We have a growing and aging population that's demanding more from clinicians than ever before. Therefore, we need a way to maintain the enthusiasm of clinicians, in spite of the stressed environment.

Achieving this won't be a simple process, and much of it will hinge on ensuring promised budgets for digital technology remain. Should we manage to do so, change management will be the next key step. The introduction of digital technologies will always require training and support – helping Trusts ensure the technology and new approaches are embedded and adopted. This will require the organisation to accept that time and resources must be dedicated to it.

With such backing the NHS will be able to increase the adoption of electronic patient records, integrate patient data in a meaningful way and link with social care systems to provide a complete patient overview – helping clinicians provide a better service at the point of care.

What technologies do you see as having the biggest impact this year?

The cloud will transform patient services, with its scalability, ability to reduce expenditure by not having to invest in additional hardware or recruit expensive technical resources to run the software day-to-day. With costs cut on technical support and management overheads – and software continuously updating – Trusts can look away from the management of technology and focus on the delivery of patient services.

This, alongside the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI), should reduce the burden of administration and support clinical decision-making.

How do you think health tech has changed recently?

Health tech hasn't significantly 'changed' in the last year but by necessity and time, adoption of digital technology has grown – as has the adoption of AI, which is becoming more pervasive and will expand to more often support their clinical decision freeing clinicians to focus on patient care.

Tags: Digitisation of the NHS, Cloud, Predictions

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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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