What's next

Healthcare

Are you ready for your digital patients?

From September 2017 NHS patients in England can access their GP record online via the revamped www.nhs.uk. This is just the latest in a suite of online healthcare information services rolling out this year and next that, says Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt, will deliver a 'patient powered generation' over the next ten years.

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Patient online access

Granting online access to medical records and care plans is one of the most effective ways to engage patients. The revamped www.nhs.uk now gives all of us the opportunity to:

- book or cancel appointments online with a GP or nurse
- order repeat prescriptions online
- view parts of the GP record, including information about medication, allergies, vaccinations, previous illnesses and test results
- view clinical correspondence such as hospital discharge summaries, outpatient appointment letters and referral letters

Curiosity eventually got the better of me and recently I had a second go at accessing my patient record through the newly available GP online services via www.NHS.uk. My first attempt twelve months ago seemed overly lengthy and confusing and I abandoned. This time, once I'd received log in details from my GP surgery, the registration process seemed easier. Now I have an app on my phone ready to go should I ever need it.

Patient empowerment

Eagerly I selected 'view your medical record'. Perhaps I should not have been disappointed by the empty content. After all, I have visited my surgery (excluding age/gender-appropriate screenings) only three times in the last twenty-five years and have difficulty remembering the name of my GP. However, I am sure my time will come. When it does, I am already more empowered and can readily foresee the benefit of being able to check the accuracy of my own patient record, see and book/cancel an appointment, order prescriptions online and perhaps most importantly choose who else is able to view my record. Meanwhile the GP online services website includes some short videos of real patients, with complex health needs, describing how they've already benefited from the service.

Documentation exacts a heavy toll

Granting online access to medical records and care plans via www.nhs.uk and other emerging solutions must be one of the most effective ways to engage patients. However, the quality of data in many patient records and the EPR is poor and therefore may sometimes not be relied upon to give accurate clinical advice to patients without some considerable effort. This adds yet another burden of administration for already hard-pressed GPs, allied healthcare professionals and other members of practice teams who will need to pay greater attention to writing accurate, contemporaneous notes with their patients in mind. Already, the challenges relating to general practice clinical documentation—accurately recording the patient

consultation, writing referral letters and reports, meeting medico-legal requirements etc. can seem overwhelming.

Proven technology to help make the leap to online

GPs are rising to the challenge and continue to raise their game and by leading investments in technology to help keep them ahead of the workload. Speech recognition integrated into clinical documentation is a mature, proven technology. It supports the quick, easy capture of not just the structured data but also the more detailed and descriptive elements of the patient consultation (narrative) to provide context and rationale within the patient record. Speech recognition technology leads to better outcomes and a more consistent experience for patients. It also eases the administrative burden of clinical documentation, freeing the practice team to devote time and energy to matters more essential to the practice and the well-being of all its patients however those same patients choose to access services – on or offline.

Tags: clinical documentation, general practice, NHS, patient engagement, patient outcomes

More Information

	Download a recently released primary care e-paper Find out how a speech-enabled clinical documentation supports patient access to GP online services Download

About Sarah Fisher

Sarah Fisher is regional marketing manager at Nuance healthcare division covering UK, Ireland and APAC. Sarah has 25 years in marketing and sales at companies including Xerox, Siemens and Cisco. A spell at Novartis leading a team to deliver 'more-than-medicines' solutions in UK healthcare combined her degree and a first job in Pharmacology research with a passion for the potential of healthcare IT to overcome the many challenges faced by all healthcare systems. In her spare time Sarah leaps fences and tackles tricky trails pursuing her hobbies of horse trials and mountain biking.

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