

What's next



Healthcare

We must work to address the root causes of clinician burnout

Working practices have changed for millions of people across England this year, and for healthcare professionals the changes have perhaps been the most drastic. Nuance set out to explore the extent of impact from the pandemic on clinical administration and clinician burnout by surveying NHS healthcare professionals from primary and secondary care. More than 900 healthcare professionals completed the survey and Nuance has published a report based on the findings. The survey results have also been submitted to a parliamentary committee inquiry into workforce burnout and resilience in the NHS and social care.

Dr Simon Wallace

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The survey results are sobering and reveal diminishing levels of resilience, wellbeing and increases in stress and anxiety amongst the NHS workforce. Two thirds of respondents agreed their work-life balance has worsened since the start of the pandemic.

Our survey was conducted from 16th September to 4th October, before a surge in cases saw the country placed into another national lockdown. In the context of these new restrictions, the strain placed on healthcare professionals is likely to have worsened. For those in primary care, there is also the future task of administering Covid-19 vaccines to consider. We will be depending on these clinicians to help get the country back to normal – a huge responsibility, and one that will place further pressure on the system and the individuals that work within it. Stress and burnout in the NHS will have wide-reaching consequences.

According to the survey 85 per cent of respondents agreed that clinical documentation is a major contributor to burnout, and this assertion is backed up by many academic studies. Perhaps unsurprisingly, several interviewees described the burden of administration to be a problem long before the pandemic hit.

This problem has been exacerbated by the pivot to remote consultations, which 78 per cent of primary care respondents stated had caused an increase in general workload. Remote consultations require telephone triage, increased email correspondence and interacting via video conferencing software is draining in itself. With many staff working from home, communication with colleagues that previously would have been face to face is now also carried out via email, phone, or video conferencing. On top of this, Covid-19 regulations are constantly being updated and requiring action. One interviewee described a “flood” of information via email and WhatsApp.

We know that stressed and exhausted clinicians are less effective and less equipped to care for patients and our report makes it clear that, left unchecked, stress and burnout amongst the NHS workforce will increase in the coming months. Better and more accessible mental health support services for clinicians will be vital, but we must also work to understand and tackle the root causes of clinician burnout, to prevent clinicians needing to access support services in the first place.

Public bodies and the NHS must re-evaluate what we ask of clinicians in terms of administration, determining what is truly valuable information that needs to be recorded, and how we can make recording that information easier. When the volume of administrative tasks is having an impact on a clinician’s ability to carry out their core duty – caring for patients – then surely it is not worth the cost.

[To download the report ‘The impact of Covid-19 on clinical administration and clinician burnout’ and to see our survey results in full, click here.](#)

Tags: [clinical documentation](#), [clinical speech recognition](#), [clinician burnout](#), [NHS](#)

More Information



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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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