What's next

Healthcare

Speech recognition delivers efficiencies for the NHS

When I speak to GP Practices, departments or trusts, one thing that strikes me is that there's a change afoot when it comes to both the interest in and adoption of speech recognition. Indeed, I'm encouraged to see that there are many speech recognition pilots and trials being conducted, and there is real enthusiasm for it, too. In many pilot trials we are conducting, users are already saying they would "kick and scream" if we took speech to text technology away.

Sarah Fisher
Posted 8 October 2018

Consumerism of speech recognition

I think there are two fundamental reasons for this renewed interest in speech recognition in healthcare. First, the greater awareness of speech as a user interface has been driven by consumer products e.g. Siri and Amazon Echo, as well as many new cars featuring the technology. These high-profile consumer applications have helped bring people up to speed with what the technology can do. It is an eye-opener for anyone who may have been put off by their experience of speech recognition ten years ago when the technology wasn't as mature or as advanced as it is now. There's no doubt that the latest speech recognition engines combined with the power of neural networks has vastly improved recognition accuracy and ease of use .

Achieving the paperless NHS

Second, from a healthcare perspective, the increased interest in speech recognition comes at a time when the NHS faces a seemingly impossible challenge; to balance constantly rising patient numbers with greater demands versus dwindling financial and clinical resources. But these demands have not been met by any increase in investment made in the NHS. One immediate impact is that capturing patient information accurately and comprehensively on paper becomes even more challenging. The pressure to turn around more documents is driving healthcare professionals to adopt new technologies that reduce the reliance on paper. If they can create and manage documents more effectively they can be more time efficient.

From a patient care perspective – and in line with the NHS five year forward view – banishing the inefficiencies that come with managing paper records is key to freeing GPs and other clinicians from the administration burden that eats into the time that they could be spending with their patients.

An NHS efficiency life-line

This is where speech recognition is proving to be a valuable ally. Dictating directly into an EPR is less time consuming than writing notes or dictating into an audio file for later transcription. Medical documentation created using speech recognition cuts out many process stages and can help GPs and Trusts meet government targets for turnaround times and move them closer toward the goal of a paperless NHS.

Be clear about the goals

For speech recognition projects to be successful it is vital that GPs or Trusts are clear about the outcomes they want from deploying the technology. Is it financial? Is it to free up clinical resources? Is it to reduce secretarial costs? Once we know these, along with any baseline metrics for administration costs and document turnaround times (TATs) etc, we can look at how speech recognition can be best applied to deliver the results and ensure rapid ROI.

Looking ahead, I can't foresee the pressure on the NHS going away. However, the adoption of cloud-based speech recognition solutions in hospitals is very promising. I believe that speech recognition can throw the NHS an efficiency lifeline. Speech recognition will help the NHS save money, reduce the reliance on paper and to create and manage the ever growing volumes of patient records.

Tags: clinical speech recognition, NHS

More Information

	Request a demo Discover how speech recognition has driven efficiency and freed up resources for transformation in the NHS Engage us

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.

View all posts by Sarah Fisher