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UK healthcare predictions 2023: Three trends that will define the sector this year

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As the UK healthcare sector looks ahead to another challenging year in 2023, here are three ways AI and digital technologies will help organisations withstand continued disruption while pushing forward with ambitious transformation initiatives.

In the coming year, the UK healthcare sector will have to weather many challenges, from nursing strikes to chronic staff shortages. All the while, the pressure will be on to accelerate the digital transformation agenda of the Health and Social Care Act 2022.

However, while the challenges cannot be ignored, there are opportunities too. Here are three ways technology will help organisations overcome some of their most pressing issues in 2023 and create a bright, digital future for UK healthcare.

1: AI-powered technologies will help to alleviate burnout

As we enter 2023, tackling the ongoing clinician burnout crisis remains a critical priority for the entire industry. Although the pandemic's peak is behind us, its impact is still being felt as backlogs continue and staff shortages increase. The pressure to see, treat, and discharge more patients—at a faster rate—has never been greater.

As a result, clinician burnout is at an all-time high, putting patients and those treating them at risk, and

leading many clinicians to consider quitting the profession. If significant action isn't taken quickly to mitigate the causes of burnout, we're likely to see strike action and staff shortages increase, putting even more pressure on the sector.

While digital transformation efforts in the healthcare sector are not new, we expect technology investment to accelerate in 2023 to alleviate some of the strain on clinicians. With recent research showing that healthcare professionals spend 13.5 hours per week on clinical documentation, up more than 25% from seven years ago, it's clear where changes should be made.

Speech recognition solutions, for example, can help reduce the administrative pressure on clinicians and enable them to work smarter and more effectively. These technologies convert speech into detailed clinical notes directly in the electronic patient record, allowing clinicians to focus on doing what they spent years training for: treating patients. By streamlining workflows and automating the creation of clinical documentation, these tools give clinicians hours back in their day, so they can improve their work-life balance and rediscover the joy of practicing medicine.

2: Patient and clinician experiences will reach new digital heights

When the pandemic struck, healthcare technology investments boomed. Nightingale hospitals were opened in a matter of months, a new online infrastructure was built to enable people to order COVID-19 tests, and telehealth and video consultations became commonplace.

While many of the changes made during the pandemic were born out of necessity, they've led to a greater focus on the role digital technologies can play in improving patient experience and clinician satisfaction.

Organisations across the NHS are asking questions like, "What should a virtual waiting room look like?", "How can patients interact digitally with clinicians and share their medical history?" and "How can clinicians get seamless access to patient records and create clinical notes more easily?"

During 2023, healthcare organisations will look for answers to these questions and many more. But in doing so, they'll need to avoid adopting technology for its own sake, and ensure the solutions they invest in deliver meaningful value for clinicians and patients.

3: The NHS' digital front door will open wider

The massive popularity of the NHS App during the pandemic was no surprise—people needed it to prove their vaccination status, so they could attend events, visit restaurants, or travel to certain countries.

The NHS App served an immediate need in exceptional circumstances, but it also showed millions of people across the UK the value of using modern technology to access healthcare services—it gave patients a digital front door.

In 2023, this digital front door will open even wider, as hospitals and integrated care systems launch similar patient-focused applications and portals. In theory, these new channels should improve the patient experience by making healthcare more accessible to more people, when and where they need it.

The growth in digital accessibility will also extend to at-home monitoring. Wellness and fitness trackers have become a part of everyday life for many people, and as we move into 2023, the next step will be to use these devices to modernise at-home care. The data wearables gather could enable organisations to improve and personalise patient experiences, making effective healthcare easier to access than ever before.

Stay up to speed in 2023

These are just some of the trends we expect to have a major impact on UK healthcare during 2023 and beyond. But the healthcare sector is extremely dynamic, and things change quickly, so be sure to check in on our blog throughout the year for new perspectives on the latest developments.

Tags: Clinical documentation, Dragon Medical One, Predictions, Future of Healthcare, Burnout

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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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