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Why data is like black gold when it comes to digitising the NHS

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Dr Simon Wallace reflects on his time at the Digital Health CCIO Summer School and on Professor Keith McNeill's references to data being like crude oil. He points out data in electronic patient records is often varied and that speech recognition can ensure data is recorded accurately and in a timely manner.

Pessimists amongst us might view our journey towards a digital healthcare service fit for the 21st Century as tortuous. I was recently fortunate enough to attend the [Digital Health CCIO Summer School](#) where this frustrating crusade was put centre stage.

There were several key themes across the two days including the critical role of data, the threat from cyber security and the basic principle that the patient must be at the focal point in the digital journey as well as an interesting workshop on essential leadership [behaviours](#). Amongst the speakers was Professor Keith McNeill, the first Chief Clinical Information Officer for NHS England. He believes the fundamental ingredient underpinning a digital health service centred is high quality data is key – and he described it as the new crude oil.

Better health outcomes, better patient experience and

affordability

Data is critical to making complex systems work effectively – an organisation's resilience results by devolving responsibility to the front line – this requires quality data to provide key information for smart decision making. And although the electronic patient record (EPR) could be thought of as the drilling platform, many clinicians know the quality of data in the EPR is often variable. To make matters worse, research has shown the EPR [adds an extra 30-40 minutes](#) to the activity of a doctor's day .

Smart technology to support data input

Given that the key commodity is clinical information, we need user friendly tools to input data accurately into the EPR in a timely manner. At the Summer School, Nuance and its partner Voice Power demonstrated speech recognition in action at Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust, one of the 16 NHS acute [Global Digital Exemplar](#) (GDE) sites. The experience shows speech recognition can be one such smart technology in two main key ways:

1. Speech-to-text is a simple yet powerful way to support healthcare professionals to input relevant and important clinical data
2. At the same time voice recognition helps reducing the number of clicks navigating around the EPR.

Patient centred care, digitally enabled

Juliet Bauer, the new Director of Digital Experience at NHS England underlined at the CCIO summer school [the importance of putting patients at the centre of any digital health experience](#). She felt too much attention has been placed on the supply of solutions rather than understanding the demand as well as improving adoption.

This is a theme that Nuance can wholeheartedly agree with since [usability is at the forefront](#) of our minds when we develop our software and also when we look to the future. That is why Nuance is pioneering the use of [tools that allow developers to create speech interfaces and intelligent machines](#), helping to transform the way in which people interact with the technology that surrounds them.

Tags: [Digitisation of the NHS](#)

More Information

Make it easy and fast to use the EPR

Find out how a speech-enabled clinical documentation process supports the continuity and quality of care and raises clinician satisfaction by improving EPR usability

[Learn more](#)



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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