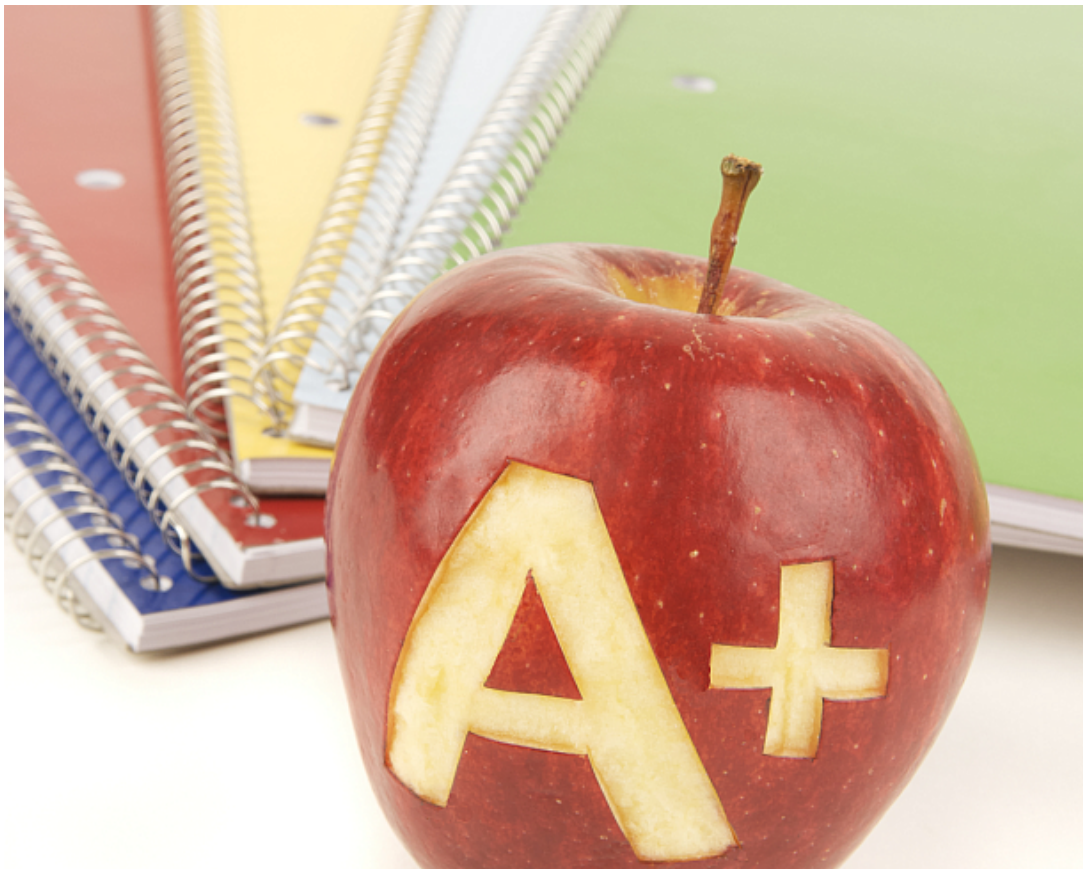


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NHS Digital: time to do its homework on clinical documentation

Dr. Simon Wallace | Chief Clinical Information Officer (CCIO), Nuance Healthcare UK and Ireland

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The newly-launched NHS Digital Academy has plenty of potential to transform the NHS through digital innovation. However, the training programme must acknowledge the challenge of clinical documentation and the impact it is having on frontline staff. One technology that the new cadre of Digital Academy trainees should be aware of is speech recognition software, which is already being used inside and widely outside the NHS.

The [NHS Digital Academy](#), launched in Manchester August 2017, is the fruition of another Robert Wachter [recommendation](#). Over the next three years it will train up to 300 digital leaders starting with chief clinical information officers (CCIOs) and chief information officers (CIOs). Rachel Dunscombe, CIO at *Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust* has become its chief executive and describes it as the 'beginning of a profession'.

Understandably there is a lot of excitement and attention on the Academy. Its chair Lord Ara Darzi, former health minister and head of Imperial's Health Innovation Unit wants CCIOs and CIOs to be sitting as executive members of boards. He says this is because 'these leaders are the only way we are going to drive digital implementation and transformation'.

Technology needs to support the healthcare transformation

Professor Keith McNeill, the can-do Aussie leaving his post of NHS CCIO, believes the Academy has the opportunity to 'provide people on the ground with the skills to understand tech and have transformational leadership capabilities – transform from the ground root and branch'.

The curriculum will be an interesting starting point and there certainly is a lot of ground to cover. It could easily span health informatics, systems design, [clinical decision support](#), data interventions for service improvement, health information technology implementation to management and leadership.

The clinical documentation challenge

Sadly, one area I fear it may not cover in detail is how we overcome the challenge of clinical documentation. In a previous [blog post](#) I have highlighted how the ease of entering quality data by whatever method will play a [key role in realising the benefits of big data](#).

One often overlooked but proven tool for data entry is speech recognition software. You can find out more about the role that speech recognition is playing in reducing the burden of clinical documentation [here](#).

I have made bold predictions that this simple to use universal tool will quickly surpass other forms of data entry such as typing – we have no choice because in the consumer world, the likes of Alexa are making this happen in front of our very eyes. Our healthcare professionals will be coming to work asking why this technology cannot be harnessed in their day to day working and of course they are right.

As we know, this is another technology that we should not adopt just for technology's sake. It must work for the end user. It has to be accurate and address tricky medical terms taking the clicks and clunk out of the all-important electronic patient record. Finally, it needs to be linked with intelligence around decision support and [remove the arduous task of coding](#) by seamlessly doing it in the background.

There is plenty of potential for NHS Digital Academy, but if it is to fulfil the ambition then the art of digital clinical documentation has to be a key part of the agenda.

Tags: [Electronic patient records \(EPR\)](#), [Clinical documentation](#)

More Information

Why you should speech-enable your clinical documentation now?

Read our e-paper and find out how to make it quick and easy for clinicians to capture the patient story in your clinical IT systems. Usability is key to clinical engagement!

[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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