

AI deployments on the rise as NHS invests in tech to deliver improved patient experience

More trusts harnessing tech such as speech recognition to streamline clinical documentation

LONDON, UK. - June 17, 2019: One in five (19%) NHS Trusts have deployed artificial intelligence technology to improve patient services, with double that figure (38%) currently considering it and nearly one in 10 (8%) planning deployments in the next 12 months, according to new figures.

This new data was obtained by a Freedom of Information request from [Nuance Communications](#) - issued to 40 NHS Trusts, with 26 responding. The request quizzed Trusts around their use of technology to improve patient care, as well as supporting the development of clinical records.

That two thirds of Trusts have or will soon roll out AI - or are considering doing so - will be welcome news to the Department of Health and Social Care. Just last year, the department launched its [tech 'vision' for healthcare](#), calling on Trusts to "use more data-driven technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) to help diagnose diseases or conditions and to gain better insights into treatments and preventions that could benefit all of society."

Alongside this movement, one in four (27%) Trusts are currently implementing some form of speech recognition to aid the development of clinical documentation - enabling clinicians to spend more time treating patients and less time doing administration. Hospitals are increasingly harnessing technology such as speech recognition, digital dictation and typing automation systems to ease the pressure placed on healthcare workers, improve patient care and reduce overhead costs.

While these developments are encouraging, there is still more work to be done. The request also found that nearly three in four (73%) Trusts still rely on pen and paper to document clinical patient records. This figure is down from 93% in 2017 - demonstrating progress - but also highlighting the clear journey ahead.

"The current reliance on handwriting to complete patient records suggests we are still a way from the NHS' 2020 paperless pledge," Dr Simon Wallace, Chief Clinical Officer at Nuance Communications, said. "A lack of electronic patient record deployments and inefficient documentation processes are currently putting even more pressure on an already stretched organisation, with many clinicians forced to spend around half their time creating and updating patient records - rather than treating patients," he added.

Investing in technology like speech recognition will enable NHS Trusts to improve patient care and tackle staff burnout. It should also help Trusts to avoid outsourcing clinical documentation or hiring additional secretarial support at an additional cost. The outlay associated with both services were still significant for some respondents - with one Trust reporting a spend of around £140,000 on agency secretarial support to help compile outstanding patient records last year.

Some hospitals are already seeing the benefits associated with utilising these technologies. One example is [Homerton](#), which has significantly reduced turnaround time on clinical letters to patients following consultations - from 17 days to two - and has saved more than £150,000 per year in outsourced transcription costs, after deploying Nuance's Dragon Medical One speech solution.

"Progress is being made and the further deployment of AI-powered technologies - such as speech recognition - will result in more alleviation of pressure on staff, reducing clinician burnout and cutting costs," Wallace added. "Above all, investing in such technology should enable healthcare professionals to spend less time on

administration and more time focusing on their true job - caring for patients.”

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