

Caring about efficiency

GPs can save money and time by embracing the potential of technology when it comes to patient data

The government's spending review has placed healthcare expenditure firmly in the spotlight. GP practices and hospitals are facing even greater pressure to be more responsive to patients' needs – at a time when every penny that is spent is being vigorously scrutinised by those who hold the purse strings.

The current financial landscape therefore dictates that budgets have to be spent even more wisely and the results have to be even more impressive. Dr Andrew Whiteley, a GP from Warwickshire, says: "The current challenges facing primary and secondary care mean GP surgeries and hospitals need to be working hand-in-hand with their acute trusts to maximise key efficiencies.

"One of the issues at the centre of this efficiency drive is the safe and reliable transfer of patient information. If a GP practice or hospital can get this right, it has a big impact on the smooth delivery of patient care further down the line."

It is therefore surprising that a huge number of UK healthcare sites still rely on analogue dictation systems to handle and transfer vitally-important patient information.

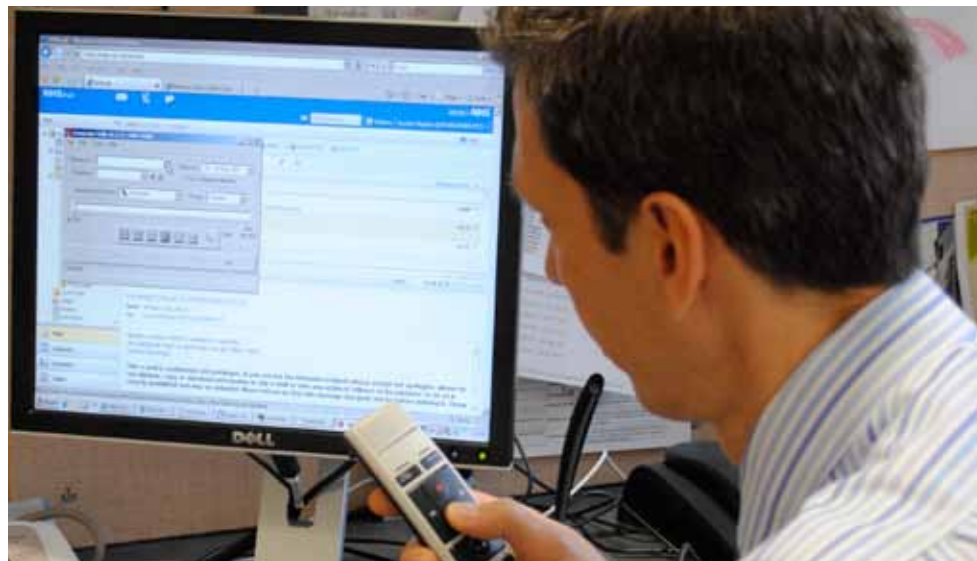
"At a time when healthcare is focused on maximising key efficiencies, it's staggering that 30-year-old technology is so widely

used," Whiteley says. "How can that be efficient when tapes degrade, secretaries lose vital time searching for dictations, playback sound quality is poor, batteries need replacing and tape machines need investment to stop them breaking down?"

It seems there has never been a more compelling case for change. Whiteley recognised the need to embrace the latest dictation technology more than a decade ago and his company, Lexacom, has been at the forefront of digital development and innovation ever since.

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Today, Lexacom supplies all-encompassing digital dictation software to customers across the UK and is the exclusive digital dictation software supplier to the LMC Buying Groups



Going digital: it's all about efficiency

Federation, an organisation that represents 4,500 GP practices in the UK.

As a practising GP, Whiteley leaves no stone unturned in the battle to uncover efficiency improvements and the results of a recent audit illustrate how big an impact a digital dictation system can make over analogue technology.

After gathering data at Appletree Medical Practice in Belper, Derbyshire, for a month, Lexacom's digital dictation software was shown to reduce urgent patient referrals from 31 hours and 42 minutes down to 1 hour and seven minutes. And when processing routine referrals, Lexacom software took an average of 26 hours and 48 minutes compared with 98 hours and 17 minutes with analogue technology.

Statistics like this point to big cost savings on administration time and a proven increase in productivity and efficiency. Digital dictation technology gives complete transparency and visibility to all work practices and workloads, ensuring that patient information is processed faster and more reliably.

Lianne Burke, IT/data manager at Appletree Medical Practice, says: "I think if I was to tell the staff that we are going to take Lexacom away, they would all hand their notices in the following day. That's how much of an impact this digital dictation platform has made in the practice."

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