

Efficiency and Rapid Return on Investment for East Kent Hospitals

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust introduced digital dictation, voice recognition and workflow management in biomedical sciences some years ago achieving a return on investment within the first 12 months. The solution has been so successful that in 2012 the Trust purchased a site licence to roll out to all outpatient specialties across all 4 Trust Hospitals. Reporting turnaround times in cellular pathology were reduced by 30% which was of significant benefit to the admin staff and brought about great efficiency and cost savings.

About the Trust

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust is one of the largest in the country with five hospitals serving a local population of around 759,000 people. Providing many health services from other NHS facilities across East Kent including child and adolescent mental health services, the Trust's motto is "putting patients first" and everything they do is guided by their vision and values.

With a widely held reputation for specialist care particularly in cancer, kidney disease, stroke and vascular services, the teaching trust also plays a vital role in the education and training of doctors with good links to local universities and Kings College University in London.

The Winscribe Solution

Project Overview

The biomedical sciences department at East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust provides cellular pathology services for the entire trust from one centralised site. The department has 94 staff including 12 consultant pathologists and deals with all requests for histology and cytopathology. Back in 2008, consultants were using a mixture of hand-written forms and analogue tapes for reporting. Secretaries were struggling to cope not only with poor hand writing but also with broken and tangled tapes and poor quality sound. Tapes were reused so there was no chance to return to the recording at a later date. This resulted in backlogs of

up to two weeks, which the department tackled by using expensive overtime – 16 hours of secretarial overtime a week at band 4, amounting to around £33,000 a year.

Paul Williams, Head Biomedical Scientist, wanted to introduce digital dictation, voice recognition and workflow management to modernise reporting. He wanted more accurate, faster reports and better job satisfaction for clerical staff. After a competitive tendering process, the Trust engaged with digital dictation and voice recognition specialists SRC, a reseller of Winscribe (now part of Winscribe).



BENEFITS

- Typing backlogs eliminated
- Urgent reports completed in 2 hours
- Max 1 day turnaround for all documents
- Return on investment within 12 months
- Workload control for secretaries

"It was time we moved into the 20th century, let alone the 21st. We moved in stages to allow the staff to get used to the technology and the software."

Paul Williams

Head Biomedical Scientist,
East Kent Hospitals University
NHS Foundation Trust



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Digital Dictation – The First Step

The trust introduced digital dictation in the cut-up area where pathologists describe tissue specimens. It was an obvious first step into the process of making the trust safer and more efficient since pathologists needed to work hands-free. With the use of wireless headsets and pneumatic waterproof foot pedals, the pathologists dictated straight into the Winscribe system where the voice files were sent automatically to the secretarial department for transcription. What made the process more efficient was that the way in which Winscribe's solutions works, dictations can be set up to be sent automatically to groups or individuals of secretaries, with the workflow managed according to resource and urgency.

A major part of this early work was staff engagement. Williams says: "The secretaries feared that there would be job losses but I was able to reassure them that this would not be the case. We offered to train them to take on new roles in the laboratory. They have kept their jobs and now have more fulfilling work." Digital dictation has since been extended within the trust to include the autopsy area within the mortuaries, to the directorate's general manager and to the outpatient departments.

Introducing Speech Recognition

The next step was to introduce speech recognition. Pathologists were already using the headsets and foot pedals to send voice files to secretaries but the introduction of speech recognition through Winscribe allowed the words to appear on screen as the clinician spoke. They could dictate their report, check its accuracy and authorise it at the same time.

Williams says: "The move to speech recognition required a change to the way consultants work and initially that was not easy. We started with two who were keen to try something different and once they had been able to show that they could produce accurate reports and improve reporting times, we found that others came on board. All our consultants are now using speech recognition."

In his experience, it takes consultants six to eight weeks to be really confident in using the technology and to reach the optimum accuracy. Williams says: "With analogue tapes the accuracy of draft reports depended on the secretary and in the worst case could be as low as 90%. Now we have consistently high standards.

Bottom Line Results

Benefits

The Trust has eliminated letter backlogs completely by using Winscribe solutions, despite an ongoing increase in histopathology requests over time. Williams says this is especially important given the department's role in cancer care pathways. Pathology reports are now typed up within 24 hours, or within two hours for urgent reports. Using speech recognition, pathologists can create and authorise reports the same day, without the need to wait for manual transcription. The system has also allowed the

department to speed up and improve the reporting process.

Williams says: "Before we got involved with Winscribe, specimen cut ups were delayed waiting for the macro description to be entered onto the LIMS (Laboratory Information Management System). Winscribe allows us to make individual macro descriptions available after each specimen, improving the availability of the macro description data to the pathologists for reporting."



"Winscribe is helping us consistently achieve a one-day turnaround for histology reports on rapid access patients."

Paul Williams

*Head Biomedical Scientist,
East Kent Hospitals University
NHS Foundation Trust*

Winscribe Case Study: Healthcare

The time released from manual transcription has allowed the creation of a number of new roles. One band 3 office worker now spends half her time in the laboratory, assisting with cutting up tissue sections. Other band 2 office workers now assist in the specimen reception area. In future, secretaries may start to complete part of the Royal College of Pathologists' cancer minimum dataset, saving more time for pathologists.

Secretaries report higher job satisfaction. Williams says: "They like managing their own workload and the typing pool is now happier and more productive. Typists do not have to struggle with poor quality sound anymore. Their new roles mean they have more variety in their work and they are now even more accurate when they are transcribing digital recordings."

The Trust has been delighted with Winscribe over the years and has

upgraded their system to new versions as they are released. "Secretaries love the latest interface. It gives them more control over their workload by allowing them to prioritise and organise their workflow."

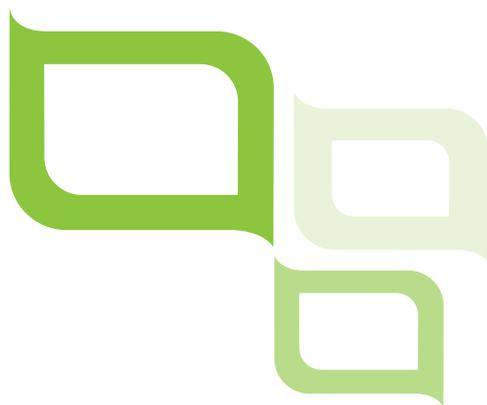
Williams, who manages the budget for the department, says he saw a return on the initial £35,000 investment in 2008 inside 12 months. "We are more than happy with our original choice of solution from Winscribe and now find ourselves as an example of how well it has worked for us, for other Trusts to come and see".

"We have shown that using digital dictation and voice recognition can reduce reporting times to a single day, with no need for sending reports to and fro for manual transcription or checking. There are numerous places this type of system could help save costs.

"Introducing digital dictation and speech recognition into biomedical science has been a good experience for us. Winscribe has provided excellent technical support and training and their advice has always been helpful."

Paul Williams

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