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Philips Digital Pocket Memo 9610 improves provider productivity and facilitates delivery of exceptional patient care.

Digital dictation streamlines workflow, speeds transcription turnaround

Broken cassette tapes... patient charts "held hostage" in transcription... lag time between patient encounters and finished transcription.

Tulsa Bone & Joint Associates sought a solution to these common problems in 2007 – and, in the Philips Digital Pocket Memo 9610, found one that more than exceeded their expectations. Physicians and staff report they couldn't be happier with the performance and benefits from their new digital dictation system.

The Challenge

Today's healthcare environment places a premium on productivity, efficiency and timely access to critical patient information.

Providers at Tulsa Bone & Joint Associates (<http://www.tulsaboneandjoint.com>) in Oklahoma felt increasing pressure to keep up, but recognized that traditional tape-based dictation and transcription processes were impeding their efforts. Completed dictation piled up before being sent to transcription and then waited in a queue before being typed. Meanwhile, patient charts that correlated with the outstanding dictation sat on the transcriptionist's desk, unavailable to other care providers.

By early 2007, the shortcomings inherent to analog dictation were unmistakable. Frustration reached critical mass, however, when a physician was obliged to record a single dictation four times one day because of tape breakage. He was forced to invest a significant amount of time re-recording the file and was understandably upset. "At that point, we knew that the practice needed to consider new dictation technology," says Wesley M. Stotler, DO, who has practiced with Tulsa Bone & Joint since 2002.

Dr. Stotler said he and his colleagues "knew that digital dictation technology was the answer to their problem" and were familiar with the benefits digital dictation offered. Besides eliminating the irritation of broken cassette tapes, digital dictation would enable providers to securely download dictation directly to their transcriptionists electronically. "We were also in the process of implementing an electronic medical record (EMR) system at the time we made the decision to step up to digital technology," Dr. Stotler says. "We wanted dictation to flow into the EMR and be appended directly to the appropriate patient's chart."

As the 17-provider practice began its search process, leadership pinpointed several priorities to guide their decision-making:

- Tulsa Bone & Joint recognized how challenging change is and did not want to force providers into making drastic modifications to their work styles. Therefore, leadership sought a digital dictation system that would function in a familiar manner – not drastically different from analog dictation, in other words. Ease of use was important. Leadership wanted both hardware and software components to be simple to navigate.



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- Providers were also concerned about patient privacy and confidentiality. They wanted to ensure that any digital dictation technology implemented would provide a high level of security, protecting information as it was being recorded, sent to the transcriptionist and later forwarded to the EMR.
- With the “broken tape incident” fresh in their memories, Tulsa Bone & Joint providers wanted assurance that nothing would happen to their dictation after it was recorded. To that end, they demanded that new technology must 1) save dictated files in the event the equipment somehow malfunctioned, and 2) enable them to track files so lost documents could be retrieved and redirected to the proper location for electronic filing.



The Solution

Dr. Stotler served as a committee of one as Tulsa Bone & Joint began its search for the right technology. His first stop was the Internet, where he conducted a Google search for possible systems and vendors. This connected Dr. Stotler with TranscriptionGear.com, which had great reviews on service and follow-up, and presented him with several products to consider.

It became clear almost immediately that the Philips Digital Pocket Memo 9610 offered the highest quality and most closely met the criteria established by Tulsa Bone & Joint. “Right off the bat, we liked the fact that the Digital Pocket Memo 9610 featured a metal case,” Dr. Stotler says. “We knew that this meant it would be more durable.”

In addition, the recorder offered a thumb-operated slide switch. “This was similar to our old recorders and meant that our providers would not need to change their dictation habits,” he adds.

Tulsa Bone & Joint initially purchased a single Philips Digital Pocket Memo 9610 recorder, which Dr. Stotler used for three weeks. This “test drive” allowed Dr. Stotler to evaluate the recorder’s functionality, and determine whether or not it would truly enhance the practice’s dictation and transcription workflow processes.

After confirming that it successfully fulfilled the practice’s objectives, leadership purchased an additional 17 units. Dr. Stotler continued in his role as champion and managed installation throughout the practice. He notes that the Digital Pocket Memo 9610 featured true “plug and play” functionality, and he found it easy to program and install the recorders. During this

process, Dr. Stotler programmed each Digital Pocket Memo 9610 so that the provider’s name or initials appeared on the large, easy-to-read LED screen. This not only identified whose recorder was whose, but also ensured that each file dictated automatically displayed the author’s name.

None of the providers found the transition from analog to Philips technology difficult. “Providers who were more comfortable with technology were using the Digital Pocket Memo 9610 in a matter of minutes,” Dr. Stotler says. “Those who were more reluctant to make a change required additional time. But even those providers were up and running within a week.”

Shortly after adoption, providers and transcriptionists alike began to realize the benefits offered by digital dictation.

The Benefits

From the beginning, providers – physicians and physician assistants – appreciated how easy the Digital Pocket Memo 9610 was to use and that the transition did not cause any slow-downs with patient encounters. Providers no longer need to worry about whether or not they have a supply of blank tapes available for dictation. In addition, they like the fact that they do not have to worry about tapes breaking, or making sure they remember to turn a tape over before it runs out. The Digital Pocket Memo 9610, in fact, archives dictation for 30 days to ensure no files are lost.

More importantly, providers have been pleased with the ability to download their dictation electronically. After they see two or three patients, providers now plug the Digital Pocket Memo 9610 recorder into the companion USB Docking Station 9120 and files are automatically

sent to the transcriptionist's computer. This means that notes dictated in the morning can be transcribed and ready for review later that day – rather than taking two or three days as in the past.

The Digital Pocket Memo 9610 also gives Tulsa Bone & Joint providers unprecedented flexibility during dictation. With tape-based systems, they could not edit their dictation along the way. If they needed to add information, they could only tack it onto the end of the tape. The Digital Pocket Memo 9610, however, allows users to quickly scan through an existing file and pinpoint the spot where they want to make an additional comment, without running the risk of recording over earlier dictation. Dr. Stotler says his colleagues also appreciate the “end of letter” function, which allows them to clearly identify the end of one document before starting a different dictation file.

By programming each recorder to display the provider's name or initials, Tulsa Bone & Joint has also avoided any problems with dictation being misdirected or attached to the wrong medical record. The provider's identifier appears at the beginning of each dictation so the transcriptionist can clearly see who is responsible for the file. Providers have also gotten into the habit of noting the digital dictation file number in the patient's chart. If there is ever a question, it is easy to confirm that documents match up after transcription.

The Digital Pocket Memo 9610 assures the security of dictated information. Each recorder is password protected and offers encryption. Tulsa Bone & Joint has not yet needed to utilize the encryption feature since files are

downloaded to an internal server, notes Dr. Stotler. However, the practice is in the process of opening a satellite office and will need to transmit dictation via the Internet in the future. “At that time, we plan to use encryption to ensure patient privacy and confidentiality,” he says.

The transcription staff at Tulsa Bone & Joint is equally enthused about the benefits of the Digital Pocket Memo 9610. Files are transmitted directly to their computers, so they can immediately see what transcription needs to be completed and better manage their workload. Priority files are flagged on their screen, so transcriptionists can quickly identify what needs immediate transcription and electronically route work to other transcriptionists in the case of an overload situation.

They have also found that digital sound quality is far superior to analog recordings, which means they understand every word of the dictation the first time they listen to it. Transcriptionists need to replay passages less frequently so each file can be completed more quickly. The clarity likewise minimizes errors during transcription.

The integration of the Digital Pocket Memo 9610 and EMR system has provided an opportunity for Tulsa Bone & Joint to re-tool internal processes. In the past, providers sent individual patient charts to transcription, along with the tape that contained associated dictation. Because there was a lag time before transcriptionists could get the dictation completed, the paper charts were “held hostage” until individual dictation files could be matched with patient encounters. With

digital dictation and the EMR, however, transcriptionists can simply review each day's schedule through the EMR and ensure they have dictation files correlating to each visit.

Staff at Tulsa Bone and Joint couldn't be happier with the Philips Digital Pocket Memo 9610, Dr. Stotler reports, adding that the system has paid for itself in just a few months. Besides saving the expense of cassette tapes, the practice is operating more efficiently, transcription turnaround has been significantly reduced, and up-to-date clinical information is available to all caregivers more quickly. Providers are more productive and seeing more patients – yet getting out of the office earlier each day.

“The process improvements that have resulted from our implementation of this advanced technology not only help providers deliver better care, but practice more effectively and efficiently as well,” Dr. Stotler says.



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