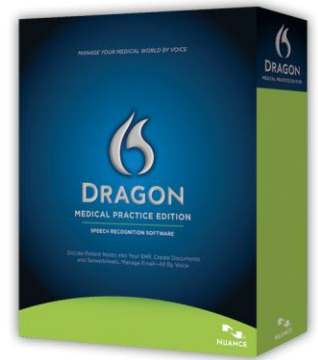# Medical Dictation Solutions – Which One is Best?

~ Blogged by Alexandria Carstens on October 19th, 2010

Introduction

I have long maintained that **a Medical dictation/transcription solution is not a cookie-cutter solution**. Most physicians are unaware that there are options available, and moreover, are uncertain as to which solution would best provide for their documentation needs.

Would a simple digital dictation solution be best? What about Dragon? And if Dragon, should a digital recorder be used or a microphone? Should the assistant or MOA be involved? What about GPs and Specialists?
The considerations are seemingly endless. However, Speakeasy Solutions has been providing effective speech solutions for over 10 years and by way of a question and answer consultation, we determine which solution would best suit the needs of the client.

At the end of the day, the physician and his or her staff must be comfortable with the technology solution. It must adapt to them. As it is, they often have little choice about the implementation of an EMR, so why not provide a voice dictation solution they will find reasonable.

The Solutions

There are 5 main technology solutions available to medical offices that will see that their dictations are captured and entered into documents via a Word Processor (**WP**) such as MS Word or an Electronic Medical Record (**EMR**). They are as follows:

Digital Voice Dictation Only

A physician dictates directly into a digital voice recorder without care for clarity of speech (unless desired). They can dictate anywhere and once they have access to a computer on a network or with Internet access (i.e. home, office, web cafe and so on), connect their recorder to the computer and either automatically or with a few mouse clicks, transfer the dictation to a transcriptionist (in office or off site).

It is then the transcriptionist's responsibility to transcribe the dictation into a WP or EMR. They will transcribe with a digital transcriber; listening and typing all that they hear.

Harness the power of speech

Dragon w/ Digital Recorder w/ MOA Proofreading

A physician dictates directly into a digital voice recorder with care for the clarity of speech. As the voice will be transcribed by Dragon® Medical Practice Edition, attention needs to be taken with how well the physician speaks with respect to speed, clarity, and pronunciation. While Dragon can transcribe a voice dictating at speeds of 140 words per minute, clarity is essential.

The digital dictation file(s) is transferred from the digital voice recorder to a computer (usually an MOA's computer) with Dragon Medical Practice Edition residing upon it. Transfer can take place via email, local network, FTP connection and so on. Some offices have their recorder's docking stations connected to the MOA's computer.

Dragon Medical Practice Edition automatically transcribes any new dictation, providing a text document (in RTF) and accompany audio file. Within Dragon Medical Practice Edition, the assistant Proofreads the resulting text, performing edits (dictator errors) and corrections (Dragon errors) with access to the physician's originally dictated voice (Dragon plays back audio associated with specific text selected in the document). Corrections performed properly by the assistant improve future accuracy of Dragon Medical Practice Edition.

The text is then copied and pasted into a WP or EMR as though the assistant had typed the text themselves.

Dragon Direct to PC

A physician dictates directly into a PC (either a WP or EMR) via a microphone (various choices available including wired and wireless, handheld and headset; the choice dependent on several factors discussed in a **previous article**).

Dictation is immediately transcribed with several benefits such as deploying repetitive boilerplate text by voice and navigating the EMR or PC with the power of speech; much more quickly than without voice commands. It is, however, up to the physician to proofread their dictation and make any necessary edits and corrections.

Optimally, the physician dictates into the EMR or into a new consult or follow-up document (based on a template) within a WP.

Support staff are not usually involved in this solution, but are sometimes called upon to modify some letters (entering referring physician names and addresses, patient details, formatting and so on) depending on the physician's time available and skill with the EMR or WP applications.

Dragon Direct to PC w/ MOA Proofreading

A physician dictates directly into a WP such as MS Word or Dragon's own text editor (DragonPad) via a microphone. Dictation is immediately transcribed with several benefits such as deploying repetitive boilerplate text by voice and navigating the PC by with the power of speech; much more quickly than without voice commands.

The physician may choose to perform edits and corrections themselves or not. Regardless, they save their voice with the dictation to a network location, where files are shared between physician and support staff.

Within Dragon Medical Practice Edition and the WP used, the assistant Proofreads the resulting text, performing edits and corrections with access to the physician's originally dictated voice. Corrections performed properly by the assistant improve future accuracy of Dragon Medical Practice Edition.

Speakeasy Solutions

The text is then copied and pasted into a WP or EMR as though the assistant had typed the text themselves. Optimally, the physician dictates into the EMR or into a new consult or follow-up document (based on a template) within a WP.

Hybrid Dragon Direct to PC & w/ Digital Recorder w/ MOA Proofreading

This solution is a combination of the physician dictating directly into a PC (with or without MOA Proofreading) and a digital recorder. See previous descriptions for more details. However, typically a digital recorder is used when the physician is away from a computer and Dragon direct is used when the physician has access to a computer.

Time Impact Considerations

One factor that bears importance to a medical office is the time impact on physician and staff when using any solution for documentation. In over 10 years I have witnessed the gamut from a physician who had time to devote to daily dictations to a physician with zero time and a bevy of support staff at their disposal. Granted, I understand that physicians do not wish to spend more time than necessary on documentation, but it must be done and it often comes down to **"How much support staff or money does a physician possess that they can allocate to documentation?"**

A new GP or Specialist with debts from schooling may have little income they can use towards paying a transcriptionist. For these physicians, a **Dragon Medical Practice Edition** solution that places the responsibility of documentation on them would be best.

A seasoned medical practitioner with ample funds and staff does not have the time to devote to handling documentation beyond rambling into a **digital recorder** and leaving it up to their staff to transcribe the dictations.

Dragon Medical Practice Edition places the power in the hands of the physician and many I've worked with over the years are delighted that their letters and narratives are completed the same day as the patient visit. Those who use a **digital recorder** sometimes complain that their staff are too busy to stay on top of transcription and letters may take days, weeks and I've even seen months, to be completed. However, with sufficient funds and staff, a digital recorder solution is appealing to some physicians.

Utilizing boilerplate text (macros for repetitious text) is a time saver that can be performed by the physician who uses Dragon directly to a PC or by an MOA. This allows the physician to voice command a word or two, after which Dragon enters specific text of any length. An MOA would use the features of the WP application to begin typing a few letters, after which the WP enters specific text of any length. Regardless, if repetitive text is useful, some setup is required but the gains are obvious.

In the following table, **time impact is measured on a scale of 0 to 3** with 0 being the least impacting and 3 the highest. There will always be variations, exceptions and other factors. Please speak with myself (Alexandria Carstens) directly to determine where your needs would fall within the table below.

Solution	Time Impact on Physician	Time Impact on MOA & Financial Impact on Physician	Boilerplate Text Shortcut Use
Digital Voice Dictation Only	0	3	MOA
Dragon w/ Digital Recorder w/ MOA Proofreading	1	2	MOA
Dragon Direct to PC	2	0	Physician
Dragon Direct to PC w/ MOA Proofreading	1	1-2	Physician & MOA
Hybrid Dragon Direct to PC & w/ Digital Recorder w/ MOA Proofreading	1-2	1-2	Physician & MOA

If the physician has very little time to devote to documentation and resources for near unlimited support staff, a Digital Voice Dictation Only solution is suitable.

If the physician has some time and few resources for support staff, a Dragon Direct Medical solution is suitable.

To EMR or Not to EMR

Most physicians are using or will soon be using EMRs in their office. Some will be required to use an EMR directly themselves. Others will continue to put scribbles to paper charts and call it a day. There are also different types of EMRs – those that are accessed across a Citrix server, some via a web browser, and a few are run on a local PC. All have pros and cons unto themselves and also with respect to deploying a technology dictation solution.

The implementation of a Dragon Medical Practice Edition solution direct to PC whereby a physician uses an EMR themselves can be **enhanced by the creation of custom voice commands**. These custom commands allow a physician to navigate as well as enter data into an EMR much more quickly than they could manually with mouse and keyboard. An efficient and clever combination of mouse, keyboard and voice provide the most rapid use of a computer as well as an EMR.

Dragon Medical Practice Edition is not necessarily the most effective solution when used across a thick client Citrix server. There is no ability to perform edits or corrections across a Citrix server, and custom commands may be limited. Built-in commands will not be available at all. There are, however, workarounds that can be discussed and implemented. And finally, on the subject of using Dragon Medical Practice Edition across a Citrix server, a well set up speech recognition solution allows a physician to dictate with near 100% accuracy, and therefore if the physician does not need to perform many edits after dictating, using Dragon Medical Practice Edition across a Citrix server should be quite effective.

If not using an EMR, the medical office is likely using WP templates for new consults, follow-ups, and medical legal reports. If so, most physicians are dictating into new documents based on these templates with their support staff finishing the documents by inserting referring physician and some patient data.

Depending on the solution desired, the onus of entering text into EMR or a WP document will be the responsibility of the physician and/or the MOA. And in some cases, copying and pasting from DragonPad (Dragon's built in text

editor) may be required. Copying and pasting generally takes no more than one minute per dictation for an MOA conversant with keyboard shortcuts.

Solution	Physician Navigation of EMR	Type of EMR Best Suited For Solution	Physician Enters Text Into…	MOA Enters Text Into…
Digital Voice Dictation Only	manual	Citrix based, or non-compliant with Dragon	n/a	EMR or WP
Dragon w/ Digital Recorder w/ MOA Proofreading	manual	Citrix based, or non-compliant with Dragon	n/a	copy & paste from DragonPad into EMR or WP
Dragon Direct to PC	voice & manual	Web Based, Standalone (non Citrix)	EMR or WP	n/a
Dragon Direct to PC w/ MOA Proofreading	voice & manual	Any	EMR or WP (for proofing)	proofread from WP document, copy & paste into EMR if needed
Hybrid Dragon Direct to PC & w/ Digital Recorder w/ MOA Proofreading	voice & manual	Depends	EMR or WP (for proofing)	proofread from WP document, copy & paste into EMR if needed

If the physician dictates repetitive text, and/or wishes to use voice commands to navigate their EMR or computer, a Dragon Direct Medical solution is suitable.

If the physician has an aversion to technology, does not use repetitive text, and does not need to be responsible for entering information directly into an EMR themselves, a Digital Recorder solution (with or without Dragon) is suitable.

Solution Implementation (Equipment, Time & Costs)

The implementation costs will vary from solution to solution, as well as from office to office. What is described below should be considered an estimate per physician and may be more or less depending on various factors. Your office's specific needs should be discussed with Alexandria of Speakeasy Solutions for a more accurate estimate.

Initial time and financial commitments are best viewed as an investment (ROI), and the return on that investment is likely to be fairly quick. The ROI will also depend on the solution chosen as well as an office's current system for documentation.

The cost of outsourcing transcription can be quite costly to some physicians, and this may be an important point of consideration, as should turnaround time for documentation.

One other consideration cannot be fixed with a price – **improved patient care** through immediate and thorough documentation. **A detailed narrative is priceless** and is not possible with pick-list systems.

In the table below, **approximate cost is measured on a scale of 1 to 4** with 1 being the least expensive and 4 the highest.

Solution	SeS Equipment	SeS setup time	SeS time with Physician	SeS time with MOA	Approx Cost from SeS
Digital Voice Dictation Only	Digital Recorder + Transcriber	~ 1 hour	15 minutes	20 minutes	1
Dragon w/ Digital Recorder w/ MOA Proofreading	Dragon, Recorder + Transcriber (optional)	~ 1-2 hours	~ 1 hour	4 hours	2
Dragon Direct to PC	Dragon, Microphone	1 hour	~ 6 hours	0	2
Dragon Direct to PC w/ MOA Proofreading	Dragon, Microphone	~ 2 hours	~ 6 hours	~ 3 hours	3
Hybrid Dragon Direct to PC & w/ Digital Recorder w/ MOA Proofreading	Dragon, Microphone, Recorder + Transcriber (optional)	~ 2 hours	~ 7 hours	~ 4 hours	4

If little time and few finances are available for initial implementation, a Digital Voice Dictation Only solution is suitable.

If time and finances are available for initial implementation, a Dragon solution is suitable.

Increase productivity & quality of work with your EMR, and improve patient care with an efficient workflow.

Contact Speakeasy Solutions today

Summary

Which solution a physician chooses to implement depends upon a variety of factors including ongoing financial concerns, support staff availability, the type of dictation (brief, lengthy, repetitious text and so on) and more. These are merely guidelines. For a personalized solution finding consultation, please contact us and speak with Alexandria.

Solution	Primary Physician Candidate Type
Digital Voice Dictation Only	▪ no financial concerns, ▪ only wishing to save time, ▪ has access to unlimited support staff
Dragon w/ Digital Recorder w/ MOA Proofreading	▪ has few financial concerns, ▪ never in front of a computer (i.e. needing to dictate away from office), ▪ does not use repetitious text (i.e. some specialists), ▪ has access to support staff
Dragon Direct to PC	▪ has financial concerns (i.e. new physician), ▪ wishing to save MOA's time, ▪ always in front of a computer, ▪ uses repetitious text (i.e. GP) or brief dictations, ▪ must use an EMR or WP directly, ▪ has limited support staff
Dragon Direct to PC w/ MOA Proofreading	▪ has some financial concerns, ▪ always in front of a computer, ▪ uses repetitious text, ▪ must use an EMR or WP directly but willing to use WP for MOA Proofreading task, ▪ has some support staff
Hybrid Dragon Direct to PC & w/ Digital Recorder w/ MOA Proofreading	▪ has few financial concerns, ▪ sometimes in front of a computer & sometimes not (i.e. needing to dictate away from office), ▪ uses repetitious text when at computer, ▪ use of an EMR or WP directly is optional but willing to use WP for MOA Proofreading task, ▪ has access to support staff

About Speakeasy Solutions Inc.

Speakeasy Solutions Inc. provides complete speech recognition, digital voice dictation and transcription solutions. We offer products, consultation, setup, training, customization, and support services.

Services

With Speakeasy Solutions Inc. services you minimize your learning curve, maximize your productivity and ensure adoption of your chosen dictation technology.

If services are not arranged at the outset of product provision, please contact us at any time should you encounter challenges for the purposes of setup, training or support.

For those who wish very specific or a small amount of assistance with their product purchase, we offer an à la carte solution — you pick and choose your desired level of services according to your needs and budget.

And for those who desire a complete care package, there are benefits in the value adds when we provide a complete package solution (product & service) at the outset. This is the most popular solution chosen by our clients.

Products

You deserve the best. As a result of continuous research, Speakeasy Solutions Inc. provides you only with products that we have tested and that meet our high standards.

Speakeasy Solutions Inc. continuously investigates new equipment on the market, enabling you to choose from a tried and tested list in which Speakeasy Solutions Inc. has the utmost confidence.

Speakeasy Solutions Inc. has the knowledge and experience to meet challenges arising from supplied equipment.

Further Information & Contacting Us

More Information, Ordering & Obtaining an Estimate

Please **contact us** to place an order or for a consultation to discuss your solution and provide you with an estimate.

You may also use one of our **Web Order Forms** to place an order or request an estimate.

FAQ

We provide a list of the most **frequently asked questions on the Web**.

Contact us if there is anything else you would like to know.

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More frequent and detailed articles and resources can be found on our **Blog**. Also consider **subscribing**.

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Or, as always, just call us: 604-264-9109 or 1-888-964-9109