

Westmoreland GP Centre

Aintree, Liverpool

As part of our commitment to provide the best services possible to patients, we are constantly seeking ways in which to improve our various systems. Last year, we had heard of an initiative from the North Mersey Health Informatics Service, which was investigating the benefits of Digital Dictation within GP surgeries. We got on-board and were introduced to one of the suppliers involved in the trial: Crescendo.



BEFORE AND AFTER DIGITAL

The programme involved a "before-digital" and "after-digital" audit of the referral generation process. We began recording the time taken for the various aspects of the old tape based system, including: "time from consultation to dictation," "dictation to passing the tape to the secretary," "receiving the tape to typing," etc. All aspects were included.

The results of the "before digital" analysis revealed that most referrals were dictated, typed and dispatched within a 72 hour period, with urgent or fast track typically done the same day.

Following a short period of familiarisation with the Crescendo product called DigiScribe (a.k.a "Digi"), the "after-digital" audit commenced. We once again recorded the time taken when performing various tasks for just over a month, this time using Digi.

The results were in. A total of 462 referrals were generated in the month with an average turnaround time of ONLY 2 hours and 36 minutes from the time the patient left the consulting room to the time the referral letter was printed and ready for the post: a staggering 80% improvement in turnaround and service delivery!

Westmoreland GP Centre experienced an 80% improvement in turnaround after only one month with Crescendo

There were a number of factors which contributed to the improvement. Doctors recorded referrals in a timelier manner (even between patients) because they were done individually. The delay in delivering dictations was completely eliminated as each was delivered instantly upon completion, rather than waiting for a whole tape, while the transcription time was dramatically reduced due to the clarity of the recording and improved sound quality, to name but three.

THE FINAL RESULT

When asked to compare the systems, our doctors and secretaries criticized the tape system, complaining of poor sound quality and unreliable machines that are difficult and expensive to repair or replace. The old system earned a rating of one out of five.

When it was time to rate Digi, both doctors and secretaries raved about the perfect, clear dictations as well as the speed and accuracy of transcription. They were impressed with workload and priority visibility, which helped in planning and sharing workload between secretaries. All this and the dramatically improved turnaround time helped Digi earn a five-star rating from our staff, who are now busy recommending it to other practices!