Halifax Health deploys AI-powered solutions as part of its digital strategy

Cloud-based speech recognition, documentation guidance, CDI services, and technology improve productivity and overall quality.

Challenge
– Demand for technologies that enable more efficient workflows throughout health system
– Desire to advance from a coding-based to clinically based documentation improvement program
– Need to drive improvements across documentation quality, patient outcomes, and the bottom line

Solution
– Nuance CDE Triage
– Dragon Medical One
– Dragon Medical Advisor

Results
– Improved physician satisfaction and documentation quality
– Enhanced clinical documentation specialist (CDS) productivity and efficiency—expanding case coverage by 20%
– 63% reduction in retrospective severity queries to physicians

Nuance in-workflow technologies improve operations at Halifax Health

For 90 years, Central Florida's Halifax Health has been committed to providing its community with high-quality healthcare using the latest technology available. In fact, Halifax Health has long viewed the use of information technologies as an essential part of improving care for patients. The system includes more than 500 physicians representing 54 subspecialties.

HALIFAX HEALTH

NUANCE

"Improving the satisfaction and productivity of our physicians and CDI team while advancing patient care is our primary focus. With Nuance, we are able to do just that."

Cathy Huss
HIM Director
Halifax Health

As part of its digital hospital strategy, Halifax Health leadership partnered with Nuance to augment the hospital's electronic health record (EHR) system with AI-powered solutions that not only help improve work-flow for physicians, clinical documentation improvement (CDI) teams, and coders alike, but also contributes to improved patient outcomes, documentation quality, and the bottom line.

To better support its physicians and advance the use of its EHR, Halifax Health implemented Dragon Medical One cloud-based speech recognition. Additionally, the organization was ready to transition to a more clinically focused documentation improvement program to better engage physicians around quality initiatives, improve CDS team efficiency, and support its goal to achieve clinical documentation excellence.

Ultimately, Halifax Health chose to implement Nuance's AI-powered documentation guidance solutions for the CDI team, including both workflow management and automated encounter prioritization with Nuance CDE Triage. For physicians, Halifax selected Dragon Medical Advisor to improve quality by providing better documen-tation guidance at the point of care.

Today, the Halifax Health CDI team explains that it's covering more cases on a daily basis, and—more important—focusing its efforts on the more complex cases that present the greatest opportunities for docu-mentation improvement. "We were looking for innovative technology to help us increase the reach and effective-ness of our CDI program while also engaging physicians in creating documentation that better reflects our patient population and the level of care we provide our patients," said Tom Stafford, vice president and chief information officer, Halifax Health.

Dr. Ginny Kwong, vice president and chief medical information officer, concurs, noting that the combination of people, processes, and technology drives Halifax Health toward achieving its vision and mission. "We want the best possible technology available to our providers to meet the quality demands and financial constraints that health systems face as we transition to value-based care."

Halifax expands case coverage by 20%, with a 63% reduction in retrospective severity queries to physicians
Before implementation of the Nuance solutions, the num-ber of follow-up queries was an area that needed focus and improvement, according to Dr. Kwong, not only to reduce the number of queries, but to make the entire process more efficient. "The queries could be disruptive to the physicians, even if we're talking about a simple phone call," she says. But today, with Dragon Medical Advisor providing in-workflow guidance at the point of care, Halifax physicians are adding greater specificity around patient diagnoses and better capturing the true patient story—the first time. "With the right tools in front of them, physicians are building better documentation up front," says Dr. Kwong.

The number of retrospective severity queries to physicians has declined 63%.

As a result, the number of retrospective severity queries to physicians has declined 63%. "Improving the satis-faction and productivity of our physicians and CDI team while advancing patient care is our primary focus. With Nuance, we are able to do just that," according to Cathy Huss, HIM director at Halifax Health.

> ## "The decision support is there, and it is not disruptive in the workflow. You have the time-saving components of not answering retrospective queries, but the physicians also know they're documenting patient encounters as accurately as possible."

Dr. Ginny Kwong
Vice President and Chief Medical Information Officer
Halifax Health

The Halifax CDI team has also realized a steady improvement in case review rates. The productivity afforded by the encounter prioritization solution and by automating common severity queries at the point of care has allowed the team to maintain continuous progress without the need to add resources. Consequently, CDI team members have been able to use the added time and their skills to focus on additional opportunities to affect quality; properly assign and sequence diagnoses; and, when an impact clarification is necessary, engage physicians in a meaningful dialogue about patient documentation and care quality.

Multifaceted approach to documentation quality is the key to success at Halifax
Halifax Health and Nuance designed a multifaceted approach to effectively implement the core CDI program, automated encounter prioritization, and physician-facing documentation guidance. The Nuance implementation consulting team worked with the organization's IT team using an established and comprehensive project plan. The process began with setting up a test system to install the software and then integrate the specific provider and payer data, as well as the necessary documents to build the solution.

"One thing we liked about Nuance is the comprehensiveness of its solutions. If we have any issues, wants, or needs, it is a one-stop shop. Nuance's CDI program integrates well with the systems in place at our organization. Now, all of these tools are together as far as their triaging, education, and so on. You make one call to one person and ask for whatever you need, and it's handled," said Deb Spargo, coding and CDI manager, Halifax Health.

"The Nuance team was on top of all the technical details, and the integration with our EHR went very well. Our team was truly prepared for the transition, and the go-live was smooth," according to Huss.

The other critical facet to this implementation program involved a dedicated clinical consulting team, led by Nuance experts who not only understood the specific technologies in use at Halifax Health, but also how CDI programs should function to deliver maximum benefit. Nuance consultants partnered with Halifax Health CDI team members to examine every aspect of the CDI program to optimize processes and help providers create the most comprehensive and accurate documentation possible.

"Software is just one piece of an effective documentation excellence program. Our partnership with Nuance has helped our CDS team members become more effective in their roles, allowing us to take on additional quality improvement initiatives to better serve our patients," according to Huss.

Addressing physician burnout by giving more time to interact with patients
Similarly, Halifax Health physicians are finding the Nuance solutions are making their documentation processes more efficient, which gives them more time both to interact with patients at the bedside and to spend with their families. This combination, according to Dr. Kwong, has a positive impact on physician burnout.

> ## "…you don't feel like you're spending as much time documenting, returning phone calls, and doing paperwork."

She explains: "The decision support is there, and it is not disruptive in the workflow. You have the time-saving components of not answering retrospective queries, but the physicians also know they're documenting patient encounters as accurately as possible. I do believe that

"I believe that Dragon Medical Advisor will help us continue to engage our medical staff in clinical documentation improvement. It's not just about the technologies," she says, "but also about merging in the people and processes, and leveraging them all to transform how to deliver and document care."

Dr. Ginny Kwong
Vice President and Chief Medical Information Officer
Halifax Health

helps with burnout; once you know what to document and where the highlights are, it becomes ingrained in your routine, so you don't feel like you're spending as much time documenting, returning phone calls, and doing paperwork."

Looking toward the future
Maintaining its reputation as a premier digital hospital requires an unrelenting focus on the Halifax Health technology strategy. As the organization looks toward the future, Halifax Health plans to continue the focus on enabling its caregivers with the latest innovations to help them be as effective as possible while delivering the best care to the community.

The partnership with Nuance will keep Halifax prepared to evolve with the changing healthcare landscape and to adapt to trends while delivering on its promise to the community of Central Florida. Dr. Kwong concludes: "I believe that Dragon Medical Advisor will help us continue to engage our medical staff in clinical documentation improvement. It's not just about the technologies," she says, "but also about merging in the people and processes, and leveraging them all to transform how to deliver and document care."

About Nuance Communications, Inc.
Nuance Communications, Inc. is a leading provider of voice and language solutions for businesses and consumers around the world. Its technologies, applications and services make the user experience more compelling by transforming the way people interact with devices and systems. Every day, millions of users and thousands of businesses experience Nuance's proven applications. For more information, visit www.nuance.com/healthcare or call 1-877-805-5902. Connect with us through the healthcare blog, What's next, Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook.