Dragon Medical®

Slocum-Dickson Medical Group, a Leading GE Centricity Site, Uses Dragon Medical to Optimize Patient Documentation in their EMR

Slocum-Dickson Medical Group, a premier physician-owned medical group practice in New Hartford, New York, has found Dragon® Medical speech recognition, from Nuance®, to be the key to complete adoption and utilization of their GE® Centricity® EMR.

Consistently striving for the highest quality accreditation in healthcare, physicians at Slocum-Dickson found that adopting Dragon Medical was a key contributor to achieving this commitment. Currently, over 40 physicians use Dragon Medical to dictate their thoughts directly into their patient notes, enhancing the note quality. In order to improve EMR utilization and documentation efficiency, Dragon Medical is now available to the entire physician population.

Slocum: A History of Distinction and Vision

Having recently celebrated their 70th anniversary, Slocum-Dickson has a long history of distinction. Voted "Best of the Best" among area Medical Centers multiple times, Slocum-Dickson has a reputation for excellence and being "best in class", and has set national benchmarks for high levels of patient satisfaction. The 75 physicians and 500 staff members who comprise Slocum-Dickson Medical Group have been identified as superior performers by the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) and have received accreditation from Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC) while also meeting National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) and American Diabetes Association (ADA) standards.

Slocum is considered by many to be among the most progressive users of the GE Centricity EMR and practice management system, serving as a showcase site for GE. Slocum clinical and information technology leadership have successfully deployed strategies to ensure physicians and patients are privy to the most advanced healthcare IT available in ways which help achieve practice goals.

Highlights

- Premier GE Centricity site with cutting edge technology throughout
- Over 40 physicians currently using Dragon Medical with Centricity EMR
- Success with Dragon Medical was rapid thanks to expert training conducted by Mindware Connections
- All patient notes are available real-time
- Time saved documenting allows physicians to see 1-2 more patients per day
- Collective annual transcription cost savings of $750,000 with Dragon Medical
- Physicians achieved Dragon Medical ROI of 2 months or less
- PowerScribe® is also used successfully by group
- Physicians now fully leverage the Centricity EMR thanks to Dragon Medical
- Physicians are able to code at a higher, more appropriate level
- Physicians have achieved peace-of-mind with Dragon Medical

NUANCE

Phil Porter, Executive Director, Slocum-Dickson Medical Group

Phil Porter, Slocum's Executive Director, views all IT decisions as having to continuously support leadership's vision of "one patient, one record, one system, and one schedule." When the patient leaves the examination room, the patient note is completed, follow-ups are scheduled, prescriptions are written and sent to the pharmacy, and billing information is sent and ready for submission. Porter believes that attaining this vision will lead to more efficient, effective and profitable care.

According to Rob LaPolt, Chief Information Officer, "The availability of advanced technology not only ensures quality patient care; it also helps with our physician recruitment and retention." Such a progressive and forward-thinking approach is attractive to physicians, LaPolt and Porter agree, particularly those just coming out of medical school and entering practice.

LaPolt was responsible for tailoring the group's EMR from inception to meet Slocum's demanding requirements, "building what we wanted to implement from the ground up," he recalled. Slocum chose to implement the MedicaLogic EMR in 2000 (acquired by GE in 2002 and subsequently branded Centricity). This implementation proved to be extremely successful, allowing LaPolt's team the opportunity to share best practices and custom EMR forms with other Centricity users. Standardizing on GE Centricity, the group also has used the IDX practice management solution since 1986 (also acquired by GE in 2006). Additionally, the group uses the GE (formerly IDX) RIS/PACS, completing the Centricity suite.

Real-time interaction between Centricity modules was a requirement to meet Slocum's workflow design. LaPolt and his team have gone from an "interfacing methodology between the systems to full integration. Eventually, our goal is to establish an even tighter integration among systems, resulting in a single patient database" spanning clinical and financial Centricity users.

"We had physicians in the building staying late to complete their notes and they wished they had a better method of documenting within the EMR."

Setting Aggressive EMR Goals

Challenged with an aggressive EMR adoption plan and utilization goal –100% of the physician population – clinical, IT and administrative leadership wanted a solution that would not only eliminate transcription and optimize documentation, but would also enable physicians to fully embrace the EMR.

LaPolt's staff became experts in creating and modifying Centricity's documentation screens. Still, some physicians refused to use EMR forms to enter "structured" data and they chose the laborious route of keyboarding their notes directly into the EMR. This method led to disdain toward using the EMR. Porter recalls, "We had physicians in the building staying late to complete their notes and they wished they had a better method of documenting within the EMR."

The objective of getting all patient information and data into the electronic record – quickly – was at the forefront. "We wanted to provide freedom of choice for physicians to input data into the EMR…Methods that they could embrace," LaPolt commented.

Replacing an Inefficient and Ineffective Transcription Process

Despite Slocum's plans, even after 6 years of EMR use, many physicians were still heavily relying on transcription to document care, only using the EMR directly to document a fraction of an encounter, such as patient problems and

Challenge: Fully leverage GE Centricity EMR by getting all pertinent patient information in the EMR – quickly.

Solution: Rollout Dragon Medical to providers to be used alongside the Centricity EMR

Results: Over 40 physicians currently using Dragon Medical to fully leverage Centricity EMR. Patient notes, now available real-time, are at a premium quality level. Collective annual transcription cost savings of $750,000 have been attained, and Dragon ROI took 2 months or less. Physicians are able to code at a higher, more appropriate, level. Physicians have achieved peace-of-mind with Dragon Medical.

medications. Despite continuous leadership effort to enhance transcription efficiency, a rising volume led to transcription turnaround times that were less than desirable, reaching three weeks at certain times (averaging 48-72 hours), and documentation costs were rising.

Additionally, due to the nature of transcription, some busy physicians had 100 or more unsigned charts stuck in a hefty backlog. Porter pointed out that an attempt to quell lagging turnaround times and rising costs led to sub-par note quality.

With the support and guidance of the Health Information Director, Porter ascertained that Slocum-Dickson needed to offer physicians a new approach, one that would eliminate transcription costs while optimizing documentation quality – and not slow down physicians in the way that either typing or reviewing signed dictations was doing.

Dragon Medical: The Right Solution for Accelerating Documentation in an EMR

As LaPolt began to research alternative documentation methods, speech recognition was the answer to Slocum-Dickson's challenges. Dragon Medical, the worldwide leader in real-time speech recognition technology, became an obvious choice for Slocum-Dickson as it worked seamlessly with their customized Centricity Forms.

LaPolt explains a "best practice" – the hybrid approach of EMR forms, coupled with narrative input via Dragon Medical – offers physicians a flexible note entry workflow. "Physicians have limited time, and need to document efficiently. Dragon Medical gives you a free-form approach," commented LaPolt.

Expert Training Provided by Dragon Medical Reseller Made all the Difference

As part of LaPolt's research, a group of physicians began using Dragon Medical while the Slocum-Dickson Information Technology team became intimately familiar with Dragon Medical.

LaPolt and team soon orchestrated a solid rollout plan in order to successfully bring Dragon Medical to the rest of the physician population. This rollout plan included bringing onboard an experienced Dragon Medical training team. This team, led by Pam Gratzer, President of Mindware Connections, an authorized Dragon Medical value-added reseller, was instrumental in the immediate success achieved by physicians at Slocum Dickson. "The one-on-one sessions conducted by Pam's team really set the tone for the physicians' experience with Dragon," said LaPolt.

"The vast majority of physicians are really enjoying Dragon. It speeds up the day."

Rapid Results

After their first day of training, many physicians were using Dragon Medical to generate about half of their patient notes. After only a few days thereafter, most physicians were using Dragon to dictate all of the "medical decision making" aspects of their patient notes, meaning the HPI, Assessment, and Plan. According to Porter, "The vast majority of physicians are really enjoying Dragon. It speeds up the day."

Detailed Patient Notes: Critical to Quality Patient Care

Physicians at Slocum-Dickson greatly value the ability to create detailed and descriptive patient notes via Dragon Medical. "I hate point-and-click... Anything I examine, I prefer to dictate the results," said Dr. Christopher Alinea, Urgent Care Physician. "The descriptive history of present

illness tells about 60-80% of the diagnosis; if I can add appropriate detail into my notes, explaining my thought process, it's very helpful."

Dragon Medical affords physicians the ability to reflect the uniqueness of each patient encounter directly in the note. Physicians at Slocum-Dickson have found this to be an invaluable component of ensuring quality patient care.

"I love it. I dictate, sign [the note] off, and it's done. To me, quality of life is better with Dragon Medical."

Higher Levels of Clinician Satisfaction – A Key Benefit

Dragon Medical eliminates that uncertainty and the headache of rereading notes, leading to peace-of-mind. According to Dr. Nathaniel Gould, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Physician, "When you rely on transcription and don't see your work for a week, you may not even remember what you said or who the patient was."

Dr. Peter Schklair, OB/GYN, concurs, "I don't want to have to rely on my memory for anything. With Dragon, what you see is what you get. I never have to rely on transcription… I don't even know how to use transcription!"

Additionally, physicians are able to finish up their documentation quicker with Dragon Medical, allowing them to either spend more time with patients, or to go home earlier. "I love it. I dictate, sign [the note] off, and it's done. To me, quality of life is better with Dragon Medical," said Dr. Alinea.

A Two-Month Return on Investment

Dragon Medical has provided the quickest return on investment of any Slocum-Dickson IT investment.

At Slocum-Dickson, physicians pay for their documentation costs individually. Prior to implementing Dragon Medical, most physicians were spending $12,000 per year on transcription, even with access to the EMR. The combined current list price of Dragon Medical software and training equals approximately $2,600 for each physician ($1,599 per license and ~$1000 training fee), one fifth the annual cost of transcription. With the transcription cost savings, the Dragon Medical ROI for physicians is two months.

"Our collective annual transcription savings is about $750,000," stated Porter. As even more physicians adopt Dragon Medical, this figure will increase over time. An added bonus to the cost savings, the backlog of charts physicians had to contend with prior to implementing Dragon Medical is now nonexistent.

Rob LaPolt, Chief Information Officer, Slocum-Dickson Medical Group

Improved Service to Referring Clinicians is Key to Maintaining Leadership

Porter has also seen that Dragon Medical enables his specialists to quickly produce, in real-time, comprehensive referral letters – the same day they see a patient, which leads to a strong referral base, ensuring the health of the medical group.

"Since using Dragon, my patient volume has increased significantly, and I'm still able to keep up with the documentation," said Dr. Schklair. Dr. Schklair also mentioned that with Dragon, he's able to get a referral note out 95% of the time before a given patient steps out of his office. Porter mentioned that this instant communication is "a big deal" to all physicians at Slocum-Dickson, regardless of specialty.

Furthermore, with the time savings Dragon Medical affords, physicians are able to see 1-2 more patients per day if they so choose, further enhancing profitability of the medical group.

Maximizing Reimbursement by Coding with Confidence

Another aspect of Dragon Medical that contributes to the bottom line of Slocum-Dickson Medical Group is the ability to code with confidence at the maximum level of reimbursement. Dragon Medical allows physicians to add all pertinent details of an encounter to the note, resulting in complete documentation that will fully substantiate a given code. "My notes are very complete now," said Dr. Alinea. He continued, "I found I was undercoding prior to using Dragon Medical. I'm confident if I charge more that I will be reimbursed because there is enough documentation to do so." Dr. Schklair is also confident that his thorough documentation, made possible via Dragon, helps him code at the maximum and appropriate level of reimbursement, particularly with high risk pregnancies.

PowerScribe

Physicians at Slocum-Dickson not only leverage the full-solution Dragon Medical product for primary care and specialists documenting in the Centricity EMR, their imaging department takes advantage of its core speech recognition technology using a sister Nuance product. Radiologists at Slocum-Dickson use PowerScribe®, another Nuance product, powered by the Dragon Medical speech recognition engine.

Used in concert with the GE Centricity RIS and PACS, PowerScribe contributes to an entirely digital, extremely efficient, radiology workflow. In fact, Slocum-Dickson is a Centricity site that has a fully bidirectional scheduling interface, meaning that the scheduling and registration information is updated and transferred in real time between the EMR and RIS/PACS. Radiology report turnaround time is now almost instant, compared to lengthy delays prior to implementing PowerScribe. Additionally, Slocum-Dickson has improved their radiology exam output two-fold while halving the number of radiologists (from 4 to 2 FTEs) which can also be attributed to PowerScribe.

"The final output of quick, complete documentation is ideal."

Mission Accomplished

Management at Slocum-Dickson currently make Dragon Medical available to their entire physician population. Management is pleased to see that Dragon Medical has had such a profound impact on their medical group. They feel that their GE Centricity EMR investment has now been properly leveraged, and the quality of patient documentation has been enhanced. In fact, LaPolt and his team model their EMR adoption strategies, heavily focused on Dragon Medical, to fellow medical groups.

Physicians at Slocum-Dickson are now happier and patient care has improved. Detailed referral letters are sent out before a patient leaves the office, encounters are properly documented, and educated treatment decisions are inevitably made. With Dragon Medical, "The final output of quick, complete documentation is ideal," concluded Porter. Once just a vision, now a reality: by the time a patient walks out of Slocum-Dickson, his/her electronic note is completed and the charges are documented; Porter and LaPolt are extremely satisfied with that.

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