

Partial Note Dictation within a Structured EHR Format

**A White Paper describing
Clinical Documentation Flexibility in an EHR Environment**

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Introduction

In order to attain the national goal of electronic health record (EHR) interoperability, healthcare facilities are being tasked with adopting a compliant EHR system. With this undertaking comes a multitude of challenges.

To maximize the return on their EHR investment, healthcare administrators are looking for ways to increase physician buy-in and overall compliance without compromising efficiency. To accomplish this, the health record documentation process must be both flexible and efficient. Physicians have been slow to adopt the EHR template-driven notes in place of traditional dictation due to the insufficient nature of the template documentation process. When used alone, point-and-click template methodology has proven to be restrictive and time consuming with physicians seeing fewer patients per day.

Goal

This white paper will explore the benefits of using partial note dictation to capture narrative detail in an EHR environment, complimenting the structured templates. With the ultimate goals being Meaningful Use of the EHR and physician productivity, comprehensive documentation is assured when dictation supplements physician-created documentation to capture the unique detail of each patient encounter.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), provides a financial incentive toward the cost of a certified EHR, but only if the installed EHR meets the stringent government stipulations that define Meaningful Use. To use an EHR meaningfully, healthcare entities must actively use the EHR technology for the purposes of secure electronic health information exchange, providing patients with real-time access to their records, e-prescribing and quality measures monitoring.

While the template-driven nature of EHR documentation workflow has proven unpopular with most physicians, adding the ability to insert brief narrative 'snippets' has given healthcare providers flexibility in their use of EHR templates. This hybrid method is commonly referred to as 'partial note dictation' or simply 'partial dictation'. Some EHR vendors use the term 'dictation marker' rather than partial note dictation. Not all EHR vendors include this capability, but market leaders Allscripts and Epic have offered the partial dictation feature for over six years.





Obstacles

The addition of an EHR influences the way physicians interact with their patients and how they document each encounter. Physicians may spend more time physically facing the computer screen and less time conversing with their patients when an EHR is added to the practice or hospital.

Early adopters of the EHR were promised big cost savings, greater accuracy, and real-time enterprise-wide access to patient records. One fraction of the anticipated cost savings would result from the elimination of the favored, tried and true dictation and transcription process. The point-and-click templates were guaranteed to deliver a high level of accuracy. This allegedly quick documentation method would allow for real-time access of the patient record throughout the facility.

Most of the bestselling EHR systems include templates with dropdown fields. As physicians put this new documentation methodology to the test, however, they find that the quality of their patient record is suffering. The templates are often too generic and fail to provide for the specificity necessary when dealing with unique circumstances, care plans, or surgery details. The EHR documentation results may become fragmented as physicians spend more time in front of EHR screens. Physician and other providers may become frustrated as documentation takes longer and their workday increases.



Solution

Partial dictation allows healthcare providers to insert snippets of dictation into specific sections of the EHR patient note template. This documentation model effectively harnesses the full power of the EHR without compromising the integrity of the health record.

With physicians now calling for the integration of a voice capture option within the EHR, a proven solution is partial note dictation. Some EHR vendors have included this technology for years, while others are yet to step up to the plate to accommodate a frequent, reasonable request. Other EHRs bundle a front end speech recognition offering such as Dragon Naturally Speaking, which requires physician editing and thus does not solve physician efficiency and satisfaction goals. Partial note dictation integration is a staple of Arrendale Associates' TA⁺ dictation and transcription workflow at a time when administrators are looking for an effective way to utilize their EHR with the full detail that free flowing narrative provides. Physicians save time by dictating just the unique narrative detail since the EHR system already knows the physician, patient, date and visit type.





How it Works:

Partial dictation allows healthcare providers to dictate the more detail-rich portions of the encounter within the EHR template environment. Arrendale's TA+ platform is EHR neutral and facilitates the fusion of EHR point-and-click technology with the integration of supporting dictation. The physician is able to capture patient information at the point of care with ease, while adding detail via traditional dictation. Partial dictations are merged into the template to produce a comprehensive patient note immediately after transcription.

The physician workflow process is simple and efficient. To insert a piece of dictation into a template, the physician:

- Logs into the EHR system and brings up the patient record
- Navigates to the appropriate location within the template
- Clicks the dictation icon on the EHR toolbar and begins dictating
- Clicks an icon to signify completion when finished dictating

Once the provider has completed this process, the encrypted voice files will be routed for transcription via TA+ software. Placeholders within the EHR system mark the precise spot for the text to be embedded once transcribed, encrypted and sent back through the HL7 interface. The transcribed text can be created by facility-employed medical language specialists or a medical transcription service organization (MTSO).

Arrendale Associates' TA+ is a fully integrated suite of clinical documentation solutions designed specifically with physician workflow in mind. Partial dictation integration through the TA+ platform enables healthcare facilities of any size to deliver accessible, efficient and comprehensive patient documentation. Physicians may use the dictation icon more than once while documenting a specific patient encounter. The use of various HL7 fields keeps each voice file identified and distinct when the the transcribed text is returned to the proper encounter and location within the patient's electronic chart.

Whether a physician prefers to dictate a full traditional narrative, or to supplement the template-driven patient record by inserting one or more partial dictations into the EHR, HL7 integration technology from Arrendale delivers the transcribed text to the correct location in the patient encounter documentation.



Customer Experiences



Epic and a Large Healthcare Enterprise

Before the Dartmouth-Hitchcock healthcare system (D-H) locations in Lebanon, Concord, Manchester, and Nashua, New Hampshire implemented the Epic EHR system in 2011, their annual transcription volume exceeded thirty million lines with four MTSOs transcribing the voice files. Voice capture input from nearly a thousand hospital and clinic physicians was created through the Arrendale system. D-H transcription supervisors auto-allocated jobs to each MTSO automatically based on configurable system

preferences. Arrendale HL7 interfacing delivered returned transcripts to D-H's proprietary EMR system, CIS. The addition of Epic, described by D-H as a 'clinical transformation,' added the ability to e-prescribe and to aggregate patient records from hospitals and clinics in several New Hampshire locations. For example, a provider in Manchester using Epic would be able to see previous patient detail for D-H Nashua clinic and Lebanon hospital encounters.

In advance of the April 2011 cutover, thorough testing for the partial dictation feature took place between D-H, Arrendale and the participating MTSOs. D-H providers were given the choice to document directly into Epic using the keyboard or to record relevant details via the partial dictation feature by clicking Epic's microphone dictation icon. Immediate results showed a sixty percent plus reduction in the number of transcribed lines. The transcription reduction has remained consistent in the years after the Epic cutover. Anticipated cost savings due to the reduction in transcribed lines have been achieved while each physician has the freedom to use his or her preferred documentation method. With the reduced transcription volume D-H transitioned to a single MTSO provider in 2016, A+Network Transcription, LLC.

Alex Langsner, Manager Information Systems at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Lebanon, New Hampshire, elaborates, "Because our physicians' needs and preferences vary, we have adapted the Dictation Marker (partial dictation) technology provided by our EMR vendor so that it works using both dictation via the telephone as well as via the computer workstation. Our physicians can choose which of those dictation technologies they're most comfortable with and is most easily available, depending on their location. By partnering with Arrendale our Dictation/Transcription System vendor, we were able to enhance the standard capabilities of our EMR system - and everyone, especially the patients, benefits."

In conclusion, "Partial dictation has played an integral role during and following the D-H transition to their EHR. It continues to provide optimal benefits of efficiency and rich narrative detail, creating a win-win-win situation for patients, providers and transcription service organizations." comments Cindy Michael, VP A+Network Transcription, LLC.



Allscripts and a Specialty Physician Practice

Alliance Urology Specialists (AUS) is a technology-savvy urology facility of ten physicians, one physician assistant, two physical therapists and two nurse practitioners, located in Greensboro, North Carolina. A cutting-edge research department, participation in multiple clinical trials and an on-site physical therapy department distinguish AUS as a North Carolina leader in urology. The ambitious goal of their 2007 Allscripts EHR installation was creating efficiencies and saving time for

their staff and providers while reducing the overall cost of transcription, according to Connie Parker, Alliance's EHR Workflow Leader.

In their pre-EHR implementation phase, AUS recognized the importance of making the practice's documentation transition as seamless as possible for the providers. For the project to be a success, Alliance would need to establish a collaborative spirit between themselves and their MTSO partner, Archiivus Transcription, LLC, a long-time user of Arrendale's platform and technology. The expertise of Allscripts, Archiivus and Arrendale's implementation specialists ensured that Alliance's project was in competent hands during planning, cut over and post install phases.

Connie Parker directed the project to a smooth and successful transition. Initial steps included adding an HL7 interface from Allscripts to the Arrendale platform to receive patient and account number data. Likewise, an HL7 interface was written and tested to return Archiivus-created transcripts to the Allscripts system. These interfaces included fields for partial dictation 'slices' in addition to the field for a standard dictation job number.

Alliance physicians had been dictating full patient narratives using hand held digital voice recorders. The 2007 Allscripts live date brought immediate change to physician dictation routines with the use of tethered Philips speechmikes at the PCs replacing the DVRs. Dictating directly into the patient's chart in the EHR gave the providers a preview of how the next step would be carried out. Once comfortable dictating into Allscripts with speechmikes, the providers gradually transitioned from dictating full narratives to using partial note dictation as a supplement to the EHR templates.

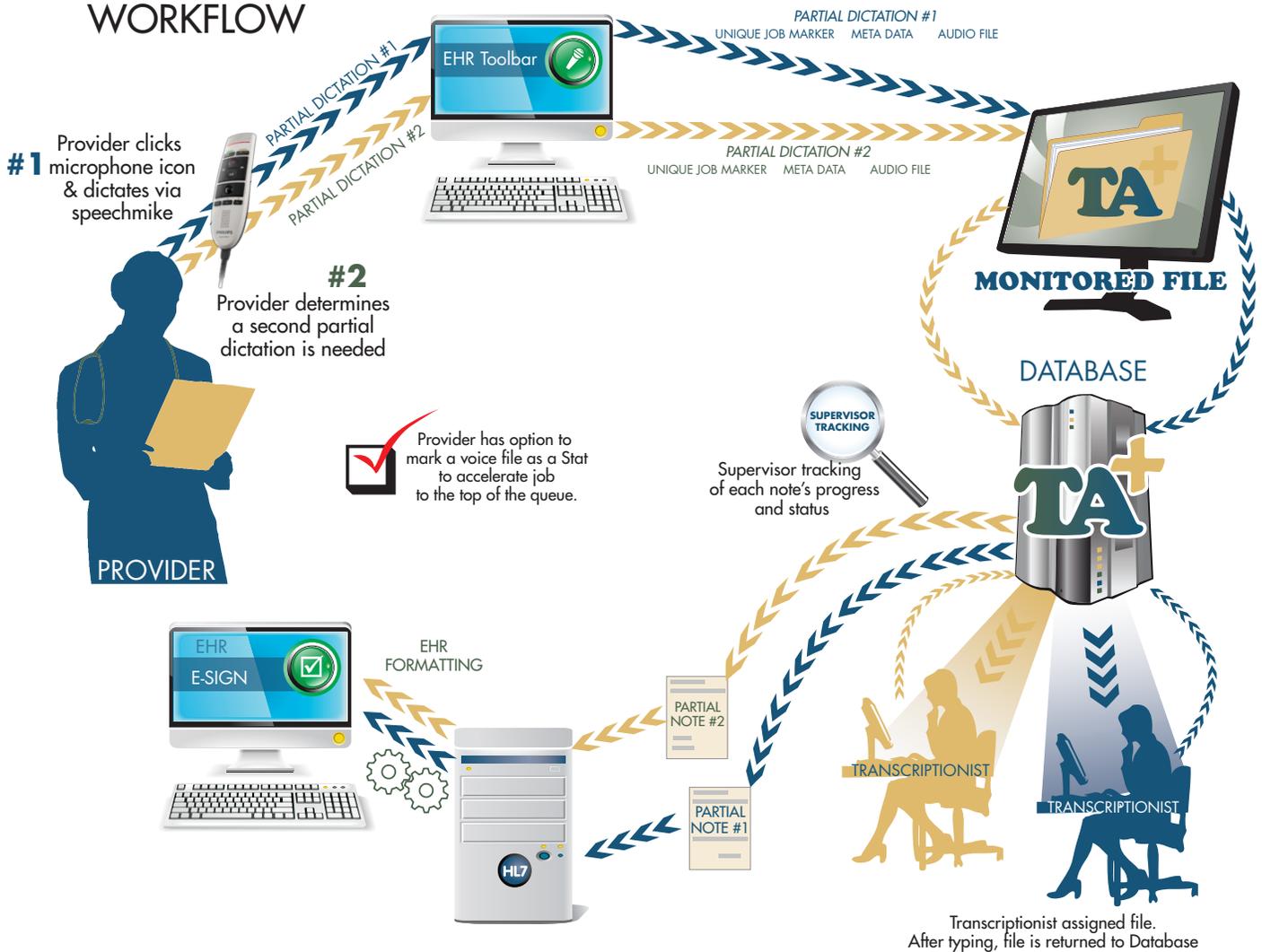
Each physician adapted the length and quantity of partial dictations within EHR templates with a slow, but clear progression towards reduced transcription volume. The year of 2008 saw the greatest volume reduction as monthly transcribed lines decreased by fifty percent from roughly 140,000 lines per month in January to fewer than 70,000 lines per month in December 2008. Transcription line volume reductions continued throughout 2009 and 2010. Line volume has remained consistent through 2011 and 2012 with 10,000 to 15,000 lines transcribed per month. Most AUS providers are documenting via templates and brief self-produced notes without dictated narrative, but two physicians prefer partial dictation and use it constantly within Allscripts templates. "These two physicians use partial dictation so that they can see more patients," explains Connie.

Alliance providers are comfortable with Allscripts and agree that the desired efficiency was achieved. Current transcribed lines and transcription expenses are approximately fifteen percent of the cost previous to the Allscripts implementation. Archiivus Transcription Supervisor, Cecilia Zappa, summarizes, "Archiivus has been using Dictation Markers for the past five years in conjunction with the Allscripts Enterprise EHR. This has proven to be an efficient way to detail the narrative portion of the medical record in a large clinic setting where there are many providers and varying dictation styles."

The Transcriptionist's Perspective

Feedback from veteran transcriptionists indicates that though initially skeptical of the partial dictation process due to the decrease in total dictation volumes, they have discovered advantages to this workflow. When transcribing only narrative snippets, the transcriptionist does not see the demographics for the patient and is relieved of the patient and account number verification responsibility. The workflow is straightforward, and the time spent within each transcript is reduced. Transcriptionists find that they move expediently from one audio file to the next, completing more jobs and possibly more total transcribed lines during their average day since no time is spent on verification or set up screens. With traditional dictation-transcription workflow, transcriptionists are always on the lookout for narrative inconsistencies, such as 'left knee' in initial descriptions and later references to 'right knee' within the same voice file. This task is mostly eliminated since the individual voice files with partial dictation are typically only one to three sentences.

PARTIAL DICTATION WORKFLOW



Summary

For facilities using an electronic health record system, partial note dictation increases physician productivity, compliance and satisfaction by ensuring that a thorough narrative is recorded in the template. As EHR adoption progresses within a site, the volume of dictation typically decreases and the goal of transcription cost reduction is achieved without the need to compromise documentation quality. Patients and caregivers in the EHR network benefit with immediate access to patient records.

Arrendale Associates utilizes innovative technology and interface skills to give healthcare providers the flexibility and efficiency necessary to keep them in front of their patients. Fully integrated solutions allow for real-time patient information access enterprise wide. For physicians who prefer to document their patient encounter with full note dictation, the option of traditional dictation, transcription and speech recognition technology are available to support individual preferences.

The consequential benefits of supplementing EHR templates with partial note dictation are greater physician approval, cost savings, improved patient documentation and more efficient workflow for healthcare providers. Partial note dictation allows providers to see more patients per day which is a critical metric in geographic areas with documented physician shortages. Workflow efficiency releases physicians from data-entry duties, enabling them to complete more patient encounters without lengthening their workday. A frequent, but unintended result, after an EHR conversion is that the number of patient visits per physician per day decreases. The use of partial dictation is one method to preserve the number of daily patient visits while maintaining physician efficiency and satisfaction.

Arrendale Associates has supplied cloud-based clinical documentation software products and services to enhance physician productivity since 2002. Arrendale's custom workflow and engineered solutions for dictation, transcription and electronic signature work hand in hand with Dragon Medical Edition speech recognition software for provider efficiency. Hospitals, clinics and transcription service organizations worldwide benefit from AAI's TA+ flagship platform by reducing costs and utilizing flexible documentation methods to enhance provider satisfaction. Integrated smart phone applications deliver the convenience providers require to document in their offices, while in transit and from remote locations. Arrendale provides integrated transcription service outsourcing through our subsidiary, A+Network, LLC. More information about Arrendale's TA+ platform, mobile products and services is available at www.aaita.com and by calling 800.344.1323.

