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Voicebrook Delivers Quality of Life for Pathologists at Memorial University Medical Center

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Summary Analysis

- **Problem** – The pathology department at Memorial University Medical Center was experiencing slow turnaround times and inconsistent output due to their transcription process and was seeking a cancer reporting solution to maintain its accreditation as a cancer center.
- **Solution** – Voicebrook VoiceOver, which provides speech recognition, digital dictation and reporting tools and workflow for pathology, as well as CAP eCC templates for cancer reporting.
- **Rationale** – Voicebrook was the only solution that combined the ease of front-end speech recognition technology with specific templates, vocabularies, workflow and tools that are proven to work in a complex Pathology reporting environment.
- **Results** – Eliminated manual transcription, creating significant annual savings. Turnaround time is faster. Use templates for 100% of gross reports. Dictation time for complex gross reports fell from 1.5 hours to 0.5 hours. Pathologists now in control of their time. Achieved compliance with CAP protocols.
- **Observations** – It is easy to assign a cost savings to FTE reductions, but it is hard to put a price on quality of life.

Turnaround time for transcription had become a problem for the anatomic pathology department at Memorial University Medical Center in Savannah, Georgia. Normally when a specimen came in to the lab, a pathologists' assistant dictated and recorded the gross report describing the specimen, which a transcriptionist typed. After receiving the gross report and slides, a pathologist examined them and dictated a diagnosis. Once again, a transcriptionist typed the diagnostic report and sent it back to the pathologist for proofreading and final approval. This process included a transcription delay at two points, which created a bottleneck in the department's operations.

"It sometimes took 24 hours for gross reports to be completed," said Dr. Blaire Baisden, Chairman of Pathology. "We would have slides in the morning, but we wouldn't have gross reports." The pathologists had to wait. These delays slowed down the workflow and often required pathologists to stay late to finish reports. If one of the two transcriptionists was out, they would get behind, creating a backlog of incomplete reports. Although the department tried to smooth out the workflow, they could not find a way to make it work.

At the same time, the department was laboring to comply with the College of American Pathologists (CAP) synoptic reporting guidelines. It was part of the accreditation for the cancer center and required the pathology department to adhere to CAP's content and formatting standards in their reports.

An Opportune Moment for Automated Voice Dictation

The CEO of the hospital suggested automated voice dictation could improve turnaround time. The radiology department had already implemented a system with successful results. Moreover, one of the two pathology transcriptionists decided to resign. It seemed an opportune moment to pursue implementing a new system. “We were ready to look at it and we had the blessing of the CEO,” said Bill Seignious, Director of Lab Services.

After researching different options, they chose the Voicebrook VoiceOver application that includes speech recognition, digital dictation and reporting tools, templates and workflow designed specifically for Pathology. The software integrates directly into the hospital’s Anatomic Pathology (AP) system. It translates users’ speech into text in real time and automatically generates pathology reports within that AP system. It was an easy choice since Voicebrook was the only solution that is proven to work in a Pathology reporting workflow and includes the most accurate pathology-specific dictionary and comprehensive set of report templates. The other solutions they researched required significant additional customization for vocabularies, templates and workflow integration with their AP system. Voicebrook was ready to go as is, and the templates facilitated compliance with CAP protocols.

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- Dr. Blaire Baisden, Chairman of Pathology,
Memorial University Medical Center

“The template feature really appealed to me,” said Kristin Garner, Pathologists’ Assistant. “It is important to my dictation time because I know I am saying everything and not having to listen to my dictation over to make sure I said something important.”

Seignious performed a cost analysis and found Voicebrook would have a two-year payback period. The primary savings was from eliminating one of the two transcriptionist positions (who was already leaving), while reallocating the other’s time to helping with other practice needs.

System installation involved loading the Voicebrook software on five computers and training users. As with all new systems, there was a learning curve for users. Seignious remarked, “It does take some time to get used to, and if people just realize, you have to get past the first couple of months where it is more difficult. Once you get past that, it is amazing.”

Accomplishment, Compliance and Quality of Life

Today the pathology department has been using Voicebrook VoiceOver for a year and is pleased with the results. The department has eliminated the need for manual transcription. Turnaround time is no longer an issue. Gross reports are ready as soon as they are dictated by the pathologists’ assistant, and pathologists are in control of producing their own diagnostic reports. Dr. Baisden added, “It puts me in the driver’s seat. I’m in charge of my own destiny now instead of having two different times in the day when I’m waiting.”

According to Garner, Voicebrook has made her more productive. It allows her to view reports

immediately and move around within the document and make changes and additions easily. She uses templates for all of her cases. On workdays with heavy caseloads that used to take 10 hours, Garner now completes the same workload in 8 hours. "I feel that I have accomplished more on any given day. Even when I have a complex case that would normally take an hour and a half to dictate, I can dictate it in a half hour or less. At the end of the day, I feel a lot more accomplished – like I have done more and am better at my job," she said.

The pathology department is now compliant with CAP protocols as well. By using VoiceOver's CAP eCC report templates, they automatically comply with the content and formatting requirements. Furthermore, the remaining transcriptionist is now free to perform other administrative work for the department.

"We are really impressed with the system. The templates are great, and the pathologists are in control of their own time. That's something they weren't in the past. Voicebrook makes it faster from start to end," said Seignious.

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