



# **Real-time Online Transcription An Integration Option**

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## **Executive Summary**

Today's health information management professionals are faced with an evergrowing number of decisions and competing interests to consider when evaluating their medical record transcription needs.

The explosion of new transcription service companies, many of which have become more like technology companies through their offering of sophisticated technology platforms as a basis for providing transcription services, have many healthcare organizations questioning whether they should be replacing all of or parts of their HIM systems. Coupled with the looming deadline to be fully HIPAA compliant (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) by April 2003, the pressure from hospital board of directors to cut capital expenditures, and the demand brought on by the fast-paced information age to have medical records produced and available almost instantaneously, the task of selecting a medical transcription solution that addresses all of these interests has become a daunting task.

This white paper examines the method of real-time online transcription as the most comprehensive transcription solution for addressing the demands of today's changing healthcare documentation environment. The goal is to provide a detailed look at the benefits of real-time online transcription and to demonstrate through a case study how this method continues to enhance productivity and save money for healthcare facilities over many of the newly developed transcription systems.

## **Real-Time Online Vs. Offline and Upload**

Real-time online transcription is a method of transcription that is defined exactly by its name – it occurs live, without any delay. With real-time online transcription, a transcriptionist has secure, direct access to the healthcare facility's HIM system and transcribes dictated reports directly into the system. As soon as the transcriptionist has completed a transcribed report, it is inside the healthcare facility's HIM system and immediately available for physician review and final delivery via fax, printer or email.

The traditional transcription method of offline and uploading, which is the backbone for many of the newly released transcription platforms, including many of those that are 100% Web-based, is a two-step process: First a transcriptionist transcribes dictations on his/her own computer or in a software program separate from the HIM system. Then the transcribed reports are generally uploaded to the healthcare facility's HIM system in batch loads at a later time through an interfacing connection between the transcription platform software and the HIM system.

## **Top Reasons Healthcare Facilities Choose Real-Time Online Transcription:**

- Transcribed reports are available immediately upon completion.
- Healthcare facility maintains tight control over access to HIM systems.
- Healthcare facility 'owns' their data by keeping it within their facility.
- No interfacing solution necessary – eliminates risk of down time and lost productivity.
- Full access to patient records enables transcriptionists to reuse all or portions of previously transcribed reports, which saves physicians time from re-dictating patient reports and cuts transcription costs for medical facilities.
- No new hardware or software needed.

### **Benefits of Real-Time Online Transcription**

The benefits of real-time online transcription are many and comprehensive in scope. Real-time online transcription is fast becoming the preferred transcription method for healthcare facilities aimed at striking a balance between the often competing interests of cost reduction, increased information security, reduced systems maintenance, enhanced productivity and simplifying the dictation and approval process for physicians.

### **Technical Cost Savings**

The technology boom over the last decade has resulted in many organizations spending gargantuan sums of money on new IT systems only to learn that a few years later the next greatest system has come along and dwarfed their once unbeatable system. Often, the prohibitive cost of installing frequent system upgrades forces many healthcare organizations to remain using their existing HIM system for several years. But the choice to not upgrade their HIM systems can often come with a price, particularly when purchasing different add-on HIM services such as an outsourced medical transcription solution.

Real-time online medical transcription is the service method that requires the least amount of technical spending. Because real-time online transcription directly accesses an existing HIM system, there are no minimum requirements for hardware or software, the process simply uses whatever system is already in place.

Another substantial cost and labor savings with real-time online transcription is the elimination of any interfacing software which can cost upwards of \$25,000 to build and thousands more to maintain annually. Because real-time online transcription provides direct access into the HIM system, there is no need to interface between a transcription platform and a HIM system for the uploading step of processing transcription offline.

### **Transcription Cost Savings**

Today, the battle between outsourced transcription providers is who can provide the lowest cost, often realized in a per line or per report price.

Real-time online transcription is in most cases the answer to finding the lowest overall transcription costs. The answer lies in the fact that real-time online transcription is performed inside a healthcare facility's HIM system, thereby giving the transcriptionist access to all previously transcribed reports. This access in some cases enables a physician to refer in his/her dictation to a previously transcribed report and request that all or part of the report be pulled into the current report thereby saving the physician dictation time and the transcriptionist time from having to re-type a transcribed report that already exists in the HIM system. The benefit of this will be furthered explained in the case study below.

### **Productivity**

In addition to increasing productivity by providing a way for physicians to minimize re-dictating patient information and transcriptionists from re-typing already transcribed patient information, real-time online transcription guards against the possibility of down time. Down time in medical transcription can be defined as the inability to transcribe and deliver completed medical reports within the critical turnaround time window due to a technical system problem. These types of problems often occur when the heavily relied upon interfacing solution that enables the transcription company to communicate with the client's HIM system fails or when

the transcription platform hosted by a third party fails. With no reliance on an interfacing solution or third party systems, real-time online transcription eliminates the risk of lost productivity and backlogged reports.

### **Security**

Compliance with the Healthcare Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) is a daunting task for any healthcare facility. Working with outsourced providers for that deals with patient information can complicate HIPAA compliance even further. This is because in addition to a healthcare facility ensuring that all internal procedures and systems have met the HIPAA requirements, it must also be educated about the HIPAA compliance standards of its third party vendors, and this information is not always easy to uncover.

Real-time online transcription poses no new HIPAA compliance scenarios since all transcription is done directly into the healthcare facility's HIM system with no information ever leaving the system. The real-time online method is ideal for those facilities that want to maintain tight control over who can gain access to their HIM system and ensures that they own their own data by never sending patient information outside of the HIM system.

### **Case Study – Real-time Transcription Savings**

The nation's leading psychiatric research hospital (Hospital A) came to EchoScribe, the leading provider of real-time online transcription, in search of cutting its transcription costs through a fully outsourced solution. After a detailed evaluation of its existing transcription process by EchoScribe in collaboration with Hospital A's medical records and IS staff, it was determined that there was substantial room to cut both dictation and transcription costs.

The first cost-cutting measure EchoScribe took was to supply Hospital A with digital dictation servers thereby eliminating Hospital A's need for its annual \$30,000 maintenance contract on its own dictation servers.

The second step was to accommodate Hospital A's request to provide a remote transcription solution that was as identical as possible to its former on-site process. This process included substantial time saving measures that reduced the physicians' need to re-dictate patient information and eliminated the transcriptionists' need to re-transcribe previously transcribed reports or portions of reports. The only way to accommodate this process, which relied heavily on quick access to previously transcribed patient records, was to enable EchoScribe's transcription staff to work directly inside Hospital A's HIM system from a remote location.

Hospital A's IS staff established a way for EchoScribe transcriptionists to securely login to its HIM system. After basic training for EchoScribe's transcriptionists on Hospital A's proprietary HIM system, the account was up and running and reports were processed in real-time online, as if EchoScribe were working in-house.

The benefits realized by Hospital A from the real-time online method of transcription were significant both in terms of cost savings and in productivity. For example, physicians continued to dictate the way they always had, whereby they could request of the transcriptionist in their dictation that all or certain paragraphs from a patient's admission note be included in a discharge summary. This would save the physician from re-dictating this information and also save the transcriptionist time from having to re-transcribe a previously transcribed report. Another example of how Hospital A

benefited from the real-time online method was by enabling a physician to request of a transcriptionist in his dictation that a patient's medical evaluation be converted into the basis of an admission note once the patient was admitted. This ability to copy and paste substantial sections of reports rather than re-transcribing previously transcribed dictations has resulted in significant transcription cost savings for Hospital A.

### **Conclusion**

Today's health information management professionals are confronted with mounting pressure to improve productivity through technology, respond to regulatory demands to increase patient information security, and do so all the while saving costs and minimizing spending. Outsourced medical transcription, if deployed using real-time online processing, can help to achieve all three goals. Real-time online transcription enables healthcare organizations to save technology budget dollars by working with existing health information management systems, protects patient information by keeping it within the healthcare facility, and improves transcription productivity by providing transcriptionists full access to patient records enabling them to reuse all or portions of previously transcribed reports, saving physicians time from re-dictating and reducing transcription costs for medical facilities.

**For more information on how [EchoScribe Inc.](http://www.echoscribe.com) can help your organization implement a real-time online transcription solution, contact us at 1-888-324-6462**