

Date:	April 15, 2025
To:	NH Medical Staff
From:	Ronald Chapman, VP Medicine Helen Craig, Executive Director, Nurse Practitioners Jeff Hunter, VP Digital Health & CIO Bjorn Butow, Regional Director, CIS & Digital Transformation
Re:	AI Ambient Scribes software in Northern Health

Northern Health (NH) is committed to leveraging innovative technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), to enhance health care delivery. AI offers substantial promise to address human resource constraints, improve access to health services, and to improve efficiency in clinical practice. NH is proactively exploring the integration and adoption of AI-enabled software tools, both as standalone solutions and integrated components, within our clinical systems.

While we are committed to adopting these tools, we also must take care to address requirements for privacy, security, and appropriate use that aligns with legislation, professional practice, and our organizational values. Among the first AI-enabled tools that are realizing immediate value in health care, are Ambient Scribes.

What are Ambient Scribes?

Ambient Scribes leverage speech recognition, natural language processing, and AI to transcribe and automatically generate clinical documentation during patient encounters. As per guidance from [BC College of Physicians and Surgeons](#), [BC College of Nurses and Midwives](#), [Doctors of BC](#) and the [Canadian Medical Protective Agency](#), and NH policy requirements within the [NH Appropriate Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence policy \(6-2-1-090\)](#), Medical staff must review, edit, and approve this documentation before inclusion into digital patient records. Some notable Ambient Scribe solutions include:

- **Small vendors:** Heidi, Empathia.ai, Scribeberry, Tali
- **Large vendors:** Microsoft DAX, Oracle Health Clinical AI Agent, Commure

What is happening in BC and Canada?

NH is involved and monitoring several provincial and national initiatives involving the use of AI Ambient Scribes:

- **Provincial collaboration:** we are participating in a provincial project, involving the Doctors of BC, to evaluate small vendor AI scribe solutions.

- **Peer Health Authorities:** we are collaborating with our peers that are currently piloting various Ambient Scribe tools, sharing outcomes, and lessons learned.
- **Funding and support programs:** we are monitoring specific funding programs established by Canada Health Infoway and the Rural Coordination Centre of BC (RCCbc) to facilitate the trial and adoption of AI Ambient Scribe tools.
- **Pan-Canadian collaboration:** we are participating in a federal, provincial, and territorial representative working group to accelerate the responsible use of AI across Canada's health care sector.

What is happening in Northern Health?

NH is committed to enabling Ambient Scribe tools as quickly and safely as possible and therefore is actively implementing several initiatives.

- **NH Appropriate Use of GenAI Policy:** last year, we developed and implemented a [comprehensive policy](#) (*access to policy requires logging into NH*) aimed at ensuring the safe, ethical, and effective use of Generative AI technology, prioritizing the rights and well-being of patients, staff, and communities.
- **Early adopter project with Nurse Practitioners (NPs):** we have a project underway with a limited group of NPs to evaluate and develop a business case for upgrading our large vendor Microsoft's (Nuance) Dragon Medical One tool with their DAX ambient scribe capabilities. Future expansion to other medical staff will be determined based on the evaluation, business case, and funding availability.
- **Privacy and security assessment for small vendor(s):** we've begun work on the Privacy Impact Assessments (PIA) and Security Threat Risk Assessments (STRA) for the Heidi (small vendor) scribe tool use in our NH clinical setting. Acceptable use of small vendor tools that are managed and paid by medical staff have unique privacy, security, liability, and appropriate use considerations that health authorities must work through. We are targeting to complete the PIA and STRA by May 2025.

Next steps:

For updates, information resources, and developing details, we have created an [AI Ambient Scribes webpage](#) on the NH Medical Staff website.

NH values your experiences and insights. Besides Heidi, we would like to explore enabling one or two other small vendor tools within NH's clinical setting. If you've piloted and/or used any other scribe tools, please go to our [quick online poll](#) to vote on the other scribe tools we should consider.