

# AI Ambient Scribe use in Northern Health

**NOTE:** The following FAQs cover use of scribe tools only used within NH-operated clinical settings. For scribe tools used in private practices, please consult your professional bodies.

## 1. What are AI Ambient Scribes?

These software tools leverage speech recognition, natural language processing, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to automatically transcribe and generate clinical documentation during patient encounters.

## 2. Why is Northern Health (NH) adopting these tools?

NH is committed to leveraging innovative technologies, including AI, to enhance health care delivery by addressing human resource constraints, improving access to health services, and improving efficiency in clinical practice.

## 3. Which AI Ambient Scribes are approved for use in an NH-operated clinical setting?

While medical staff may choose to use other tools within their private clinical settings, only the tools listed on the [Medical Staff website](#) are approved for use in NH-operated clinical settings.

## 4. What are the steps to set-up an AI Ambient Scribe in NH?

Please review the [Medical Staff website](#) for set-up instructions for approved small vendor AI ambient scribe tools (e.g. Heidi). While NH has approved these small vendor tools for use in NH clinical settings, NH does not provide IMIT support. Additionally, these tools may be directly licensed, set-up, managed, and funded by medical staff.

NH is currently evaluating and developing a business case for the AI ambient scribe solutions from its existing vendor Microsoft (Nuance). Future availability and set-up pending.

## 5. What are the privacy and security considerations?

NH is legally required to complete detailed Privacy Impact Assessments (PIA) to address how personal information is managed within a system prior to use. This is to ensure privacy requirements are met, and risks are mitigated. Specifically, PIAs address data collection, usage, storage and sharing to align with the appropriate privacy legislation.

NH is also legally required to complete Security Threat Risk Assessments (STRA) that evaluate the security posture of a system prior to use. Key components of an STRA include vulnerability analysis, security controls, assessing risks, and reviewing security measures.

### 6. Are AI Ambient Scribes safe to use?

Yes, NH approved AI Ambient Scribes are safe to use within NH's clinical settings. The way we have determined if the scribes are safe, is by going through the Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA), Security Threat Risk Assessment (STRA), and following the NH Generative AI policy.

### 7. Is patient notification or consent required when using these tools?

In NH, the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#) (FOIPPA) applies. Therefore, patient notice about the collection, use, and sharing of personal information, including the use of AI-enabled or other tools to enable clinical services is provided through signage and hand outs in NH-operated clinical settings. For certain AI enabled tools, informed patient consent may be required (as prescribed under FOIPPA).

The technology transcribes the verbal conversation during an encounter directly into written words and generates a summary with medical relevant content. The AI scribes approved for use in NH retain recordings of patient encounters according to parameters set up by the provider. Best practice guidelines suggest that recordings are retained for a minimum period of time to support provider workflow. This is an evolution of human and technology-enabled transcription tools and practices used in health care for many years. The main difference now is that patients are included, whether previously it was only the medical staff.

For private clinics, where the [Personal Information Protection Act](#) (PIPA) applies, the [CMPA Canadian Medical Protective Association](#) recommends that medical staff get patient consent.

### 8. What if a patient does not wish medical staff to use an AI Ambient Scribe during their encounter?

NH respects the rights and preferences of patients. If a patient requests that medical staff do not use an AI Ambient Scribe tool during their encounter, the medical staff will honor this request. In such cases, the staff member will document the encounter by either:

- Self-transcribing: typing notes during or after the patient's visit.
- Auto-transcribing: using NH's approved speech recognition tool without the patient present.

This ensures that patient preferences are respected while maintaining accurate and thorough documentation of the encounter.

### 9. What are the professional obligations for using these tools?

Medical staff must review and edit AI-generated documentation before inclusion into digital patient records. This includes being aware of professional obligations as set out by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC, Doctors of BC, BC College of Nurses and Midwives, the Canadian Medical Protective Agency, and NH policy requirements within the [NH Appropriate](#)

[Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence policy \(6-2-1-090\)](#). Visit the [Medical Staff site](#) for resources.

### **10. What steps do I need to consider ensuring the accuracy or reliability of the patient note?**

AI may “hallucinate,” misinterpret information, or introduce biases. As a result, medical staff must review and edit the medical notes transcribed by AI scribes because of the risk that incorrect information may become part of the patient’s medical record. Colleges require medical staff to review their records to ensure accuracy and completeness.

### **11. What privacy legislation applies to medical staff using AI Ambient Scribes?**

Compared to private clinics where the [Personal Information Protection Act](#) (PIPA) applies, in NH-operated clinical settings the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#) (FOIPPA) applies. FOIPPA legally obligates NH to complete Privacy Impact Assessments (PIA) and Security Threat Risk Assessments (STRA) prior to use of systems.