doctors of bc

AI Scribes Burden Pilot:
Community physicians' experience with AI scribes

What We Heard

AI tools have the potential to help mitigate administrative burdens for physicians and augment their provision of patient care. With varied data slowly emerging on this topic and high member interest in finding solutions to growing administrative burdens, Doctors of BC partnered with Canada Health Infoway (CHI) and Amplify Care to conduct a small pilot program to understand BC physicians' experiences with AI scribes and their impact in different clinical settings, particularly around administrative burden.

Participants:

32 community-based physicians

(9 community-based specialists, 22 family physicians)

3 AI scribe vendors

(1 EMR integrated vendor, 2 stand-alone vendors)

Data collection:

Time trackers: comparing documentation time before and after implementing AI scribe

Physician surveys: exploring experiences with and perceptions of AI scribe pre and post implementation

Patient surveys: understanding patients' experience of AI scribe use during their visit

Patient Experience

78%

of patients indicated that their doctor was able to pay more attention to them during their visit.

73%

of patients indicated that their doctor was able to spend less time on their computer during their visit.

98%

of patients surveyed agreed they felt comfortable with their doctor using AI scribe during their visit.

What did we learn?

AI scribes have the potential to improve medical documentation and patient care, but require continuous enhancements in accuracy, integration, and reliability to be fully effective in diverse clinical settings.

Reduction in cognitive burden

- All participants experienced a reduction in cognitive burden and mental fatigue, which allowed them to be more present with patients during visits and improved their ability to engage and diagnose patients.

- AI scribes also increased note quality and detail, including capturing information that would have otherwise not been possible in longer appointments.

Reduction in administrative burden

- AI scribe use was most effective at reducing documentation time for family physicians:
  - Family physicians estimated a total reduction of administrative work of 2.7 hours per week, with 2.1 hours per week being reduced after regular working hours.
  - With an average number of appointments for family physicians per week estimated at 100, this could lead to a potential time savings of up to 5.7 hours per week with maximal AI scribe use.

- Community-based specialists did not realize time savings during the 6-week pilot; however overall, 78% of participants felt that having more time to use AI scribe as part of their workflow would lead to more practice efficiencies.

Functionality

- Doctors highlighted the presence of errors in AI scribe-generated notes, specifically significant hallucinations—inaccurate or information not discussed that was included as fact. However, more than half of the participants considered the errors minimal.

- AI scribes' efficiencies showed versatility in appointment types: Simple, complex, virtual and intake.

- Other functionality challenges doctors identified included:
  - Problems with multilingual visits and language switching.
  - Technical issues, such as crashes, transcription errors, and formatting problems.
  - A lack of detail for complex evaluations, specifically for specialists.
  - Workflow disruptions due to transcription delays and glitches.

- Physician-to-physician support for implementing and optimizing AI scribe use was beneficial for both new and experienced users; peer support was valuable for addressing specific challenges and inspiring additional learning.

Physician Voices

"This is practice changing. It brings the joy back into practice ... now we can just be doctors."

"The AI scribe did wonders for my practice efficiency and I am extremely happy with the change. It has reduced my daily after-hours paperwork and allows me to see patients in a timelier manner and cut wait times".

Physician Experience

97%

of participants in this study would recommend using an AI scribe to a colleague.

What's Next

- Doctors of BC, in partnership with key health partners, will use the data and learnings from the AI Scribe Burdens Pilot to inform the development of tools and resources that facilitate the informed adoption of AI scribes in practice.

- It will also help guide Doctors of BC's ongoing advocacy to address physician burdens.
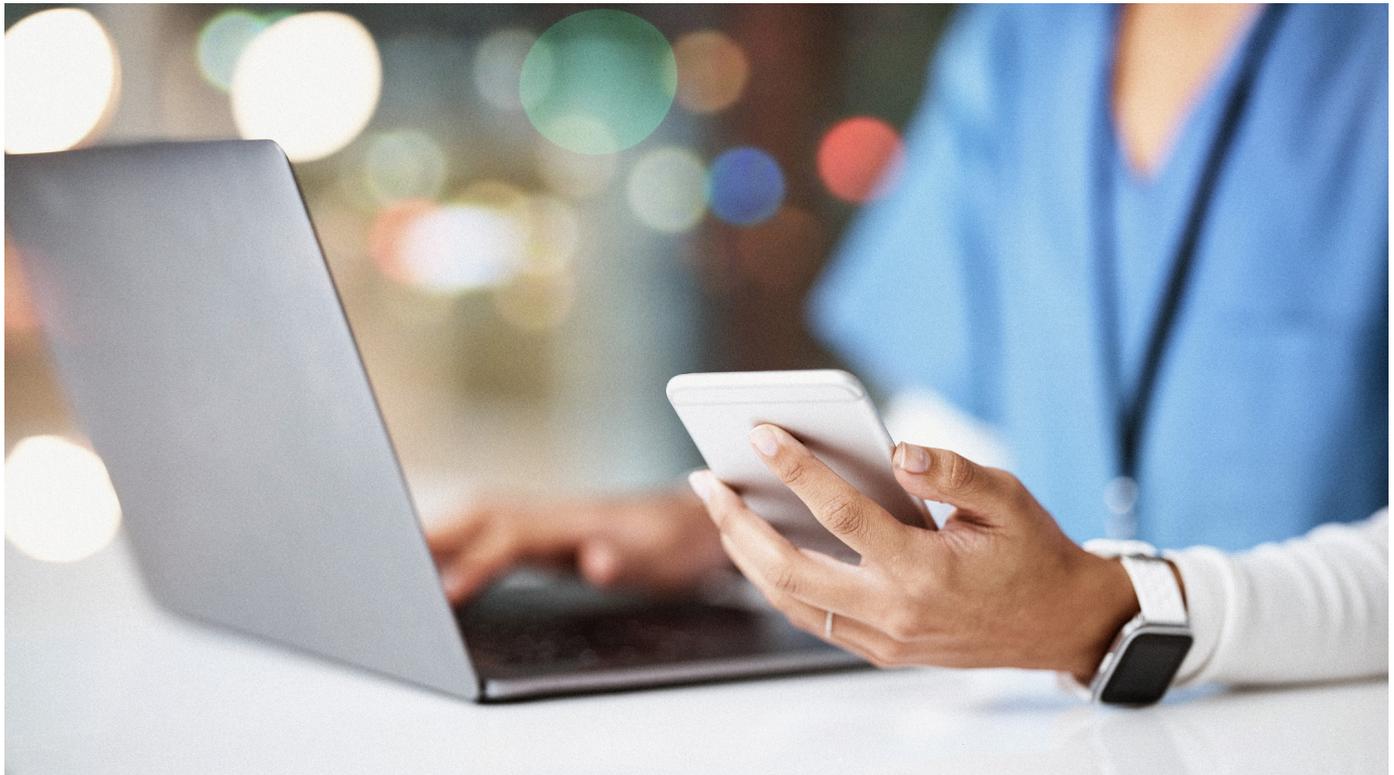
Physicians seeking guidance and support for implementing AI scribe technology can refer to Doctors of BC's **AI Scribe Technologies page**. This page outlines resources and tools as they become available.

There are many valuable areas for exploration with AI scribes and practice benefits. Future research or quality improvement projects could look at resolutions for common AI scribe errors, documentation quality, and the longer-term impacts on physician burdens and work-life balance.