

Doctor burnout? Voice-based digital assistant Suki to the rescue

Doctors are drowning in administrivia. A state-of-the-art digital assistant called Suki is poised to handle the overload, helping doctors avoid burnout and concentrate more fully on their patients.

Ascension Medical Group

[Ascension Medical Group - Tennessee](#) is dedicated to spiritually centered, holistic care that sustains and improves the health of individuals and communities. Its mission is to serve all persons, especially those who live in poverty and are struggling the most; to deliver compassionate, personalized care; and to lead healthcare transformation in the United States.

Suki AI

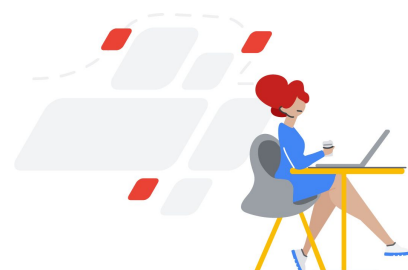
Located in Redwood City, California, [Suki AI](#) is on a mission to lift the administrative burden from doctors. Comprising clinicians and technologists building a solution based on the real-world needs of doctors, the Suki team has extensive experience designing and developing cutting-edge technology, including consumer, healthcare, and enterprise products for companies like Apple, Google, and IBM Watson.

Overwhelmed. Underwater. Always behind.

No one would want to use these words to describe their physician. Yet many physicians use these words to describe themselves, because they feel neck-deep in an ever-expanding swamp of administrivia.

The advent of value-based care has left physicians increasingly stressed. Regulatory pressures are greater, making authorization processes longer. Patient needs conflict with insurance coverage and prescription guidelines. Electronic medical record (EMR) and documentation requirements keep doctors glued to their computer screens during patient visits and often after hours. Strained organizations are cutting costs, often by reducing support staff, which only increases administrative demands on physicians.

The result of new technology and more bureaucratic oversight? According to [several research studies](#), doctors now spend more time on electronic paperwork than they spend seeing patients, and their well-being is suffering. In fact, physician burnout has reached epidemic levels.



Doctors didn't become doctors to fill out endless forms

Burnout, defined as “a long-term stress reaction characterized by depersonalization,” has been on the rise, exacerbated by endless clicking, box checking, and data entry. “Our physicians felt like they were staring at a computer screen. They weren't able to look at their patient and connect with them one-on-one,” reports Beth Van Gilder, COO of Saint Thomas Medical Partners at Ascension Medical Group.

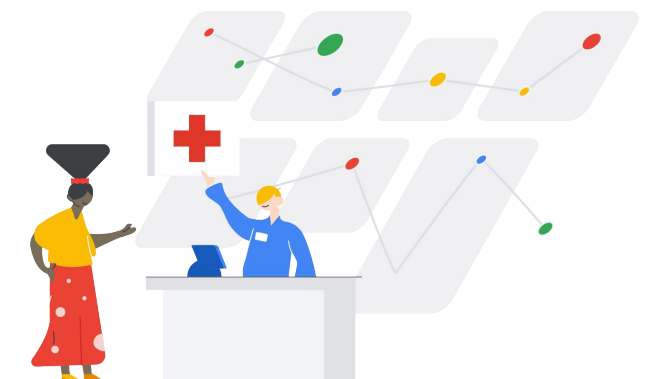
Symptoms of burnout include increased cynicism, emotional exhaustion, and lack of empathy for patients, which are antithetical not only to high-quality care, but also to why people become doctors in the first place. “They did not go into healthcare to stare at a computer screen all day long,” Van Gilder says. “The joy of being a physician is connecting with people. They're problem solvers. They are doers and thinkers, and they don't like to do that in front of a piece of hardware.”

Patients experience the impact of burnout as well, through doctors who don't give them enough time or attention and care that feels bureaucratic and depersonalized. These frustrations have intensified during the bumpy transition from paper to EMR, making burnout a top priority for Ascension Medical Group.



Beth Van Gilder, COO, Saint Thomas Medical Partners, Ascension Medical Group

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Imperfect solutions: Borrowing what works to make something new

After trying different strategies over the years to alleviate doctors' administrative burdens—including one-on-one scribes (expensive and hard to scale) and various forms of dictation (cumbersome and varying in accuracy)—Ascension decided to bring in a partner to create something new: a voice-based digital assistant called Suki.

Punit Soni, CEO of Suki AI, explains, "The vision of Suki is to rethink the healthcare tech stack and how clinicians interact with it, and make it assistive and invisible so that they can focus on what they do best, which is taking care of patients. Think of it like a Google assistant for doctors." Bundled with Google Cloud, Suki runs proprietary artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms on Google Cloud's AI platform, providing the ease of implementation, speed, and security that Google Cloud's infrastructure is known for.

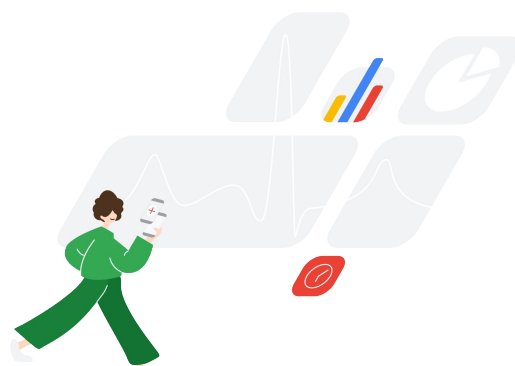
Suki aims to replicate the best aspects of earlier solutions, using AI to deliver an innovative, smoothly workable, and scalable experience: the convenience of having a one-on-one scribe who knows the doctors preferences, without the expense, and the ease of dictation without having to memorize specific commands. Suki is a cloud-based solution that doesn't require additional hardware such as speakers or microphones. Compatible with major EMRs, Suki makes pushing and pulling of data to and from the EMR seamless.

So far results are promising. Instead of spending 15 minutes writing each clinical note, Ascension doctors using Suki spend only 4.8 minutes per note, for an average savings of 80 minutes per day. The gift of nearly an hour and a half back per day can make a huge difference in the well-being of a stressed-out doctor.



Punit Soni
CEO, Suki AI

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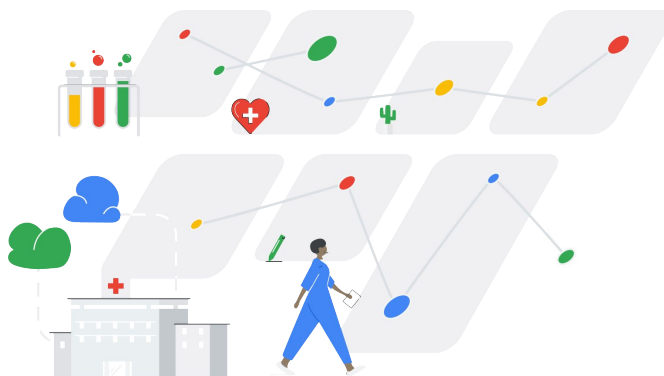


What Suki can do now—and it will be able to do soon

Physicians at Ascension have been using Suki for clinical documentation, but that's only step one in the vision for this technology. Recently added are features such as "Show me medications" and "What allergies does this patient have?" and problem-based notes with ICD-10 coding, including the ability for Suki to assign the ICD-10 code if there's enough detail available in the note. The team imagines a day when Suki can handle all aspects of administrative work for doctors, with fully automated workflows, at the speed of the doctor's voice.

More and more often, when the last patients leave at 5:00 PM, Ascension doctors are right behind them. With their notes done, doctors head home in plenty of time to replenish their energy.

Sufficient rest time helps them to take proper care of themselves and to stay connected with their passion for healing. Doctors can return to the office refreshed, able to give patients their full presence and undivided attention during office visits. A fully realized, voice-based digital assistant like Suki is not merely like a rope pulling doctors out of the swamp of administrivia; it's like an elegant hovercraft keeping them nimble, airborne, and safely out of the mire.



To learn more about Google Cloud Healthcare and Life Sciences visit:

<https://cloud.google.com/solutions/healthcare-life-sciences>

Learn more about Suki at <https://www.suki.ai>

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