AI in medical practice – What you need to consider

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Acknowledgement of country

In the spirit of reconciliation Avant acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.
We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

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What is AI?

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What is AI?

Artificial intelligence is a branch of computer programming focussed on creating machines or software that can perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence.

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How does AI work?

Using algorithms (which are step-by-step instructions a computer performs) along with inputs like:

- Audio (like a conversation between two people)
- Visual (such as images)
- Text (via keyboard and mouse).

AI can:

- Make predictions
- Provide recommendations
- Generate new content – outputs.

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AI can operate at various levels of automation and includes systems that:

- Automate decision-making
- Categorise complex data
- Generate new content.

How is AI used in healthcare?

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For system efficiency, such as:

- Waiting list management, triage, appointment scheduling
- Medical documentation and notes.

Synthesising data:

- Prediction – length of stay, unplanned readmission, staffing requirements.

Clinical decision support to make treatment recommendations.

Diagnostics, such as:

- Radiology scan review and interpretation
- Risk profiling for early intervention
- IVF embryo selection
- Breast screening
- Dermatology screening
- Pathology
- Diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma screening in ophthalmology.

Knowledge generation, such as:

- Discovering new drugs
- Keeping up to date with scientific papers
- Patient information.

Preventive medicine, such as:

- Risk profiling for early intervention
- Sepsis prediction.

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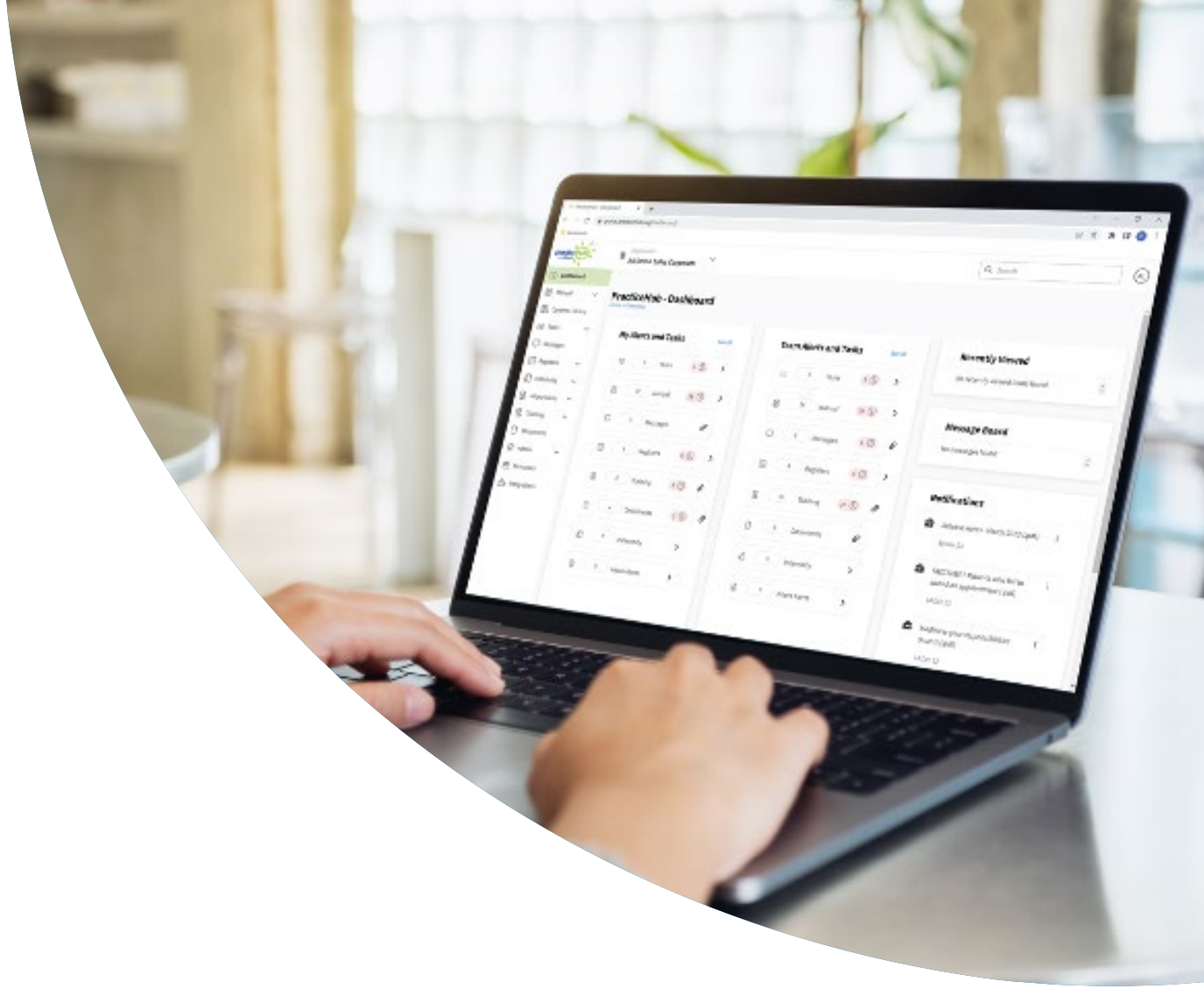

There’s no escaping AI, so make sure you understand it and how to use it effectively in practice.

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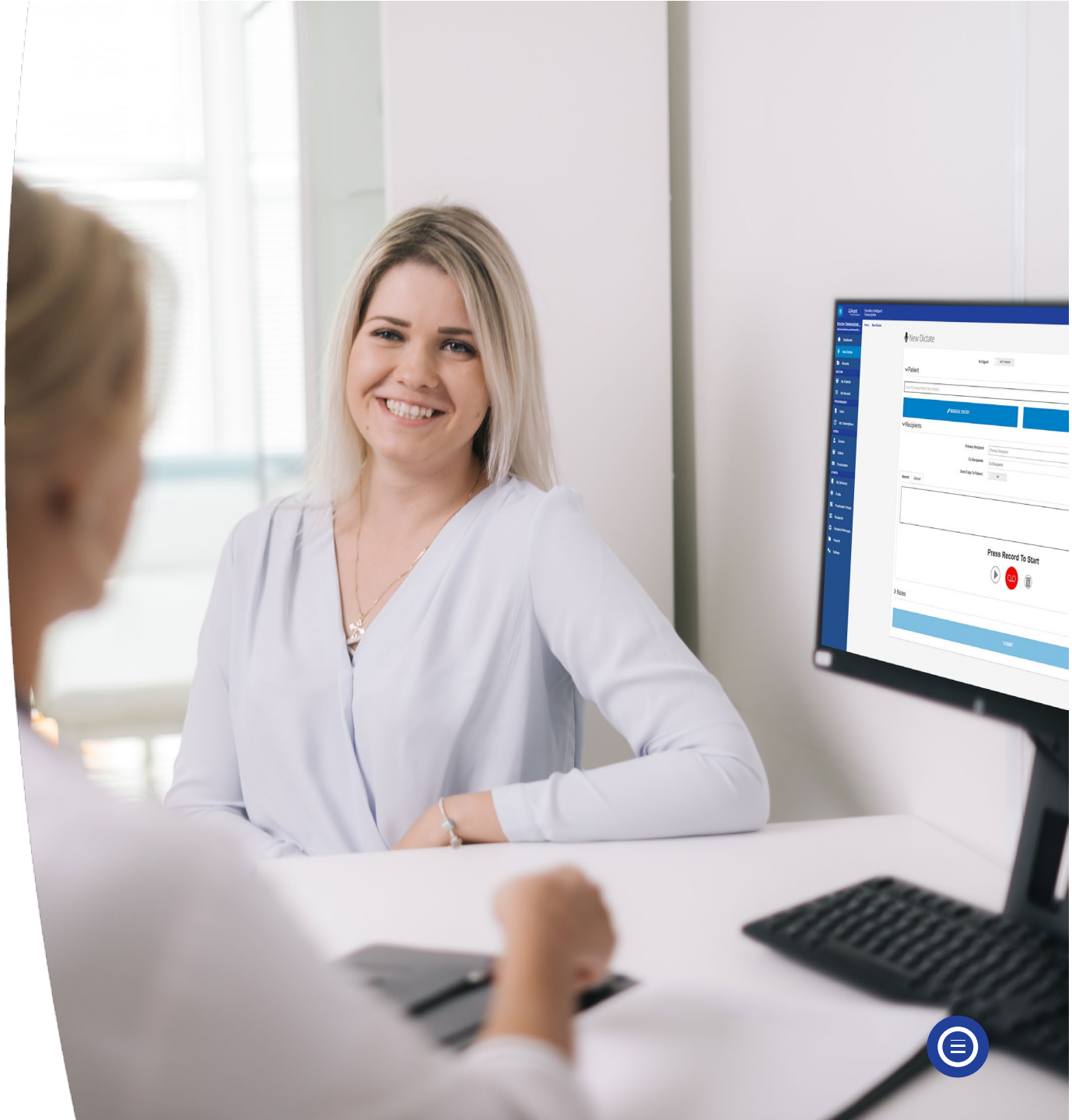
AI commonly used in medical practice

- AI-based medical transcription tools
- AI scribes.



How do AI scribes work?

AI scribes “listen” to the patient-doctor conversation then uses generative AI to compile a structured clinical note.

Some AI scribes record the conversation while others process the audio but don’t record.

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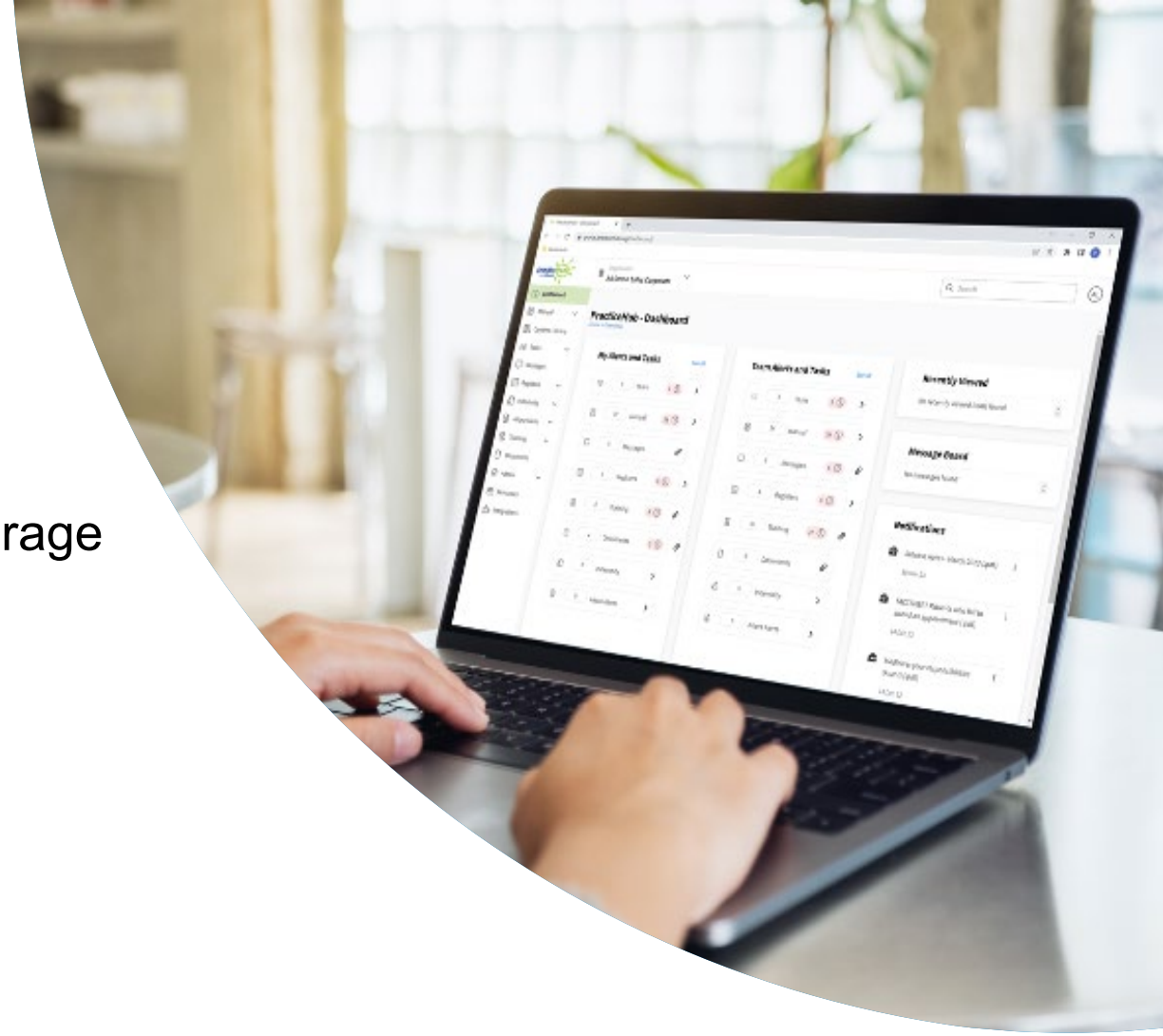
What to consider when reviewing AI scribes



- Investigate its privacy/confidentiality/data storage
- Look for a statement that it's compliant with Australian privacy law
- Is data collected or retained by the tool?
- If data is retained:
  - How long is it kept?
  - Is it encrypted?
  - Can you access it?
  - Is it stored on servers in Australia or overseas?

What are the benefits of AI scribes?

They can help provide:

- Improved patient communication through increased eye contact with patient
- Better patient understanding when you verbalise what you're doing so that it's recorded
- Improved decision making related to patient care with accurate, detailed and up-to-date patient records
- Reduced risk of transcription errors.

AI – Lots of benefits, but what about the risks?

Risks

- Privacy and data security risks
- Errors/inaccuracies leading to patient harm
- Automation bias
- Loss of clinical skills
- Operation of surveillance devices legislation
- Accountability – who's responsible if something goes wrong, and how is liability apportioned.

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When to obtain informed patient consent?

Many AI scribes prompt you to ensure you've received patient consent. Consent is needed to:

- Comply with privacy obligations
- Avoid breaching surveillance devices legislation (depending on which state or territory you're in)
- Be transparent about AI use and enhance trust.

Meeting privacy obligations

- AI scribes collect and process patient health information, triggering privacy obligations
- Under privacy law, ‘collection’ includes information gathered, acquired or generated from other data
- OAIC confirms privacy obligations apply to both input and output data from AI systems
- AI scribe data must be managed in line with the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs).

Meeting privacy obligations

Suggestions for obtaining consent:

- Explain how the AI scribe works and will be used at first use
- Offer opt-in or opt out at each consultation
- Document the verbal response – once scribe is activated, ask to confirm consent.

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Implementing an AI scribe

1. Update privacy policy to cover AI use and any overseas data storage

2. Revise cybersecurity and business continuity policies and make changes to reflect AI use

3. Add AI scribe info to patient registration form

4. Provide an info sheet or QR code at reception

5. Speak to patients about AI use.

Get in touch with us today

practicesolutions@avant.org.au

1300 469 866

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