AWC Summit Addressing Universal HIM Issues

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By Lisa A. Eramo, MA

Telling an accurate and complete patient story through clinical documentation is a goal that transcends cultures and geographic boundaries. It's also the primary theme at the 2019 AHIMA World Congress (AWC) Healthcare Information Summit that will take place October 3 to October 5 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

This ninth consecutive summit—which draws attendees from the UAE as well as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and other areas—is quickly emerging as the "Best in Class" professional development program throughout the region. Last year, a record number of nearly 700 individuals—including physicians, nurses, case managers, medical coders, finance professionals, revenue cycle managers, and others—attended the event, which focuses on medical coding, clinical documentation improvement (CDI), data analytics, informatics, artificial intelligence, and more.

The AWC Summit provides attendees with various opportunities for global networking and professional development, says Alexandre Bouché, global managing director at AWC. The summit includes state-of-the-art lectures by renowned speakers from around the world, case study discussions, hands-on workshops, and more.

Attendees consistently provide positive feedback about the event. "I have learned a lot from my first AWC conference experience," Chyndy Crisvir Corpuz, clinical coder at Tawam Hospital, wrote in a post-conference survey. "It is nice to see different points of view about the importance of clinical documentation improvement here in UAE."

"The AHIMA Summit opened a channel for UAE to understand the importance of proper documentation," Maria Lejazen Rivera, medical coder at Al Ain Hospital, wrote in a post-conference survey. "For as long as coding has existed, coders were viewed as merely a tool for reimbursement and considered at fault for revenue loss. The event opened eyes, beginning with management, to all stakeholders on the importance of training doctors."

Many attendees participate in the AWC Healthcare Information Summit through an AWC organizational membership as well as summit sponsorships from local, international, and US-based organizations, giving them access to high-quality education that they might not otherwise be able to afford. AWC organizational membership also provides organizations with three years of support based on AHIMA best practices. AHIMA subject matter experts perform an initial assessment of an organization's current process, prepare a gap analysis, conduct onsite customized training, complete an annual assessment, and provide ongoing monthly support.

The AWC Summit touches on various health information challenges, many of which are felt in both the United States and in countries abroad, Bouché says. For example, the six Emirates in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) implemented ICD-10-CM in early 2018, and many providers continue to struggle with documentation specificity to support code assignment and accurate revenue under International Refined Diagnosis-Related Groups (IR-DRGs). The lack of complete and accurate documentation also makes it difficult for providers and others to rely on coded data for the purposes of analytics and forecasting. In addition, the relatively recent UAE shift from a single government payer system to a multi-payer system introduced a whole host of coding and documentation-related challenges that are similar to ones experienced in the United States.

Learning Objectives for the 2019 AWC Healthcare Information Summit

- Master new methods of using healthcare data to optimize revenue and patient care.
- Design processes and procedures for acquiring healthcare data, and translate that data into usable information.
- Learn how to use AHIMA best practices to analyze healthcare data.

- Develop a highly trained and highly skilled workforce using AHIMA best practices.

Another commonality is the desire to exchange health information seamlessly between providers and give patients access to a longitudinal view of their own health information. Abu Dhabi, for example, recently introduced Malaffi (translation: 'My File'), an Abu Dhabi Department of Health-led initiative to develop a health information exchange platform that providers across the Emirate can access when needed. Eventually, patients will also have access through a patient portal. Malaffi also includes a centralized database of real-time population health information and analytics, enabling better management of chronic illnesses. The goal is to enhance care coordination, reduce duplication, enable precision medicine, and develop effective public health initiatives.

"Malaffi will be highlighted throughout the summit and integrated into the breakout sessions," Bouché says.

In addition to general sessions, the first two days of the AWC Summit will include three main tracks:

1. Medical coding and revenue cycle management (including topics such as inpatient and outpatient coding best practices, coding productivity, and denials management)
2. CDI and quality (including topics such as establishing and expanding a CDI program as well as CDI best practices)
3. Data analytics, informatics, and artificial intelligence (including topics such as data reporting and visualization, database management, project management, and electronic health record integrity)

The AHIMA-designed and AHIMA-led AWC Summit program welcomes speakers, presenters, sponsors, and participants from the Abu Dhabi Department of Health, UAE Ministry of Health and Prevention, local payers and providers, educators, and vendors. In addition, representatives from the Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA), the American Medical Association (AMA), and 3M Health Information Systems (3M HIS) will present best practices at the event. The third day of the summit includes various professional development workshops delivered by AHIMA, HFMA, AMA, and 3M HIS that provide a more concentrated focus on healthcare topics as well as AHIMA certification exam preparation.

"This event is critical in terms of helping organizations abroad improve the quality of their documentation," Bouché says. "It also helps healthcare professionals abroad achieve their full potential."

To learn more about the 2019 AWC Summit, visit www.awc.world/summit-2019/.

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