

Across the Continuum: Multiple Roles Provide a Wealth of Information

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by Anne Zender, MA, vice president of communications

Diane Premeau, MBA, RHIA, has advice for HIM professionals who are thinking about getting involved in regional health information projects: “Invite yourself,” she says. “They will move forward with or without HIM in the implementation, so be part of the solution in some capacity.”

That’s just one of the lessons Premeau learned from participating in a project with the California Department of Corrections. It was one chapter in a busy career that encompasses her work as an HIM administrator, privacy officer, and teacher.

HIM from All Angles

Premeau is HIM administrator and privacy officer for EMQ Children and Family Services, a behavioral health organization that offers services in three California counties. In addition, she serves as the HIT program director at Chabot College in Hayward, CA, and continues to teach courses in health information systems. She also consults as a systems analyst for health information.

Her many roles allow Premeau to study a variety of HIM issues, from managing traditional processes to researching the electronic health record (EHR). She works directly with departments to identify challenges in completing documentation and developing solutions for systems that can range from legacy systems to implementing new technology like wireless computing.

Evolution of a RHIO

Premeau’s consulting work brought her into the project with the California correctional department last year. The department was planning a migration to an EHR and wanted help implementing a scheduling system. Eventually, Premeau says, the system will be implemented in all California correctional institutions—in essence, creating a regional health information organization (RHIO).

Premeau’s job was to assess the corrections department’s staffing levels and workflow to determine whether current processes were sufficient to maintain adequate health records for a mobile population. She also assisted in the discussion for implementation of a patient information management system and EHR that will serve as a structured data system at Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA.

The project was laden with HIM-related challenges. For instance, Premeau found that many prison employees needed to be prepared for a change in workflow that included using computers and entering data. She encourages HIM professionals involved in EHR implementations to “do a full assessment of your current work force to determine ability to use a computer, interest in using a computer to do their work, and desired training,” she says. “Evaluate the work environment and adjust the migration to the EHR based on these very human factors.” She also recommends that organizations identify ways they can use their data from the beginning, so they can immediately use the system to improve their day-to-day functions and realize its benefits early.

Priceless Knowledge

To give her best guidance to EMQ and her consulting clients, Premeau needs to stay abreast of rapid changes in the industry and advances in technology, while still understanding the challenges of historical and hybrid record systems. Her work as an instructor helps her stay up to date, as does networking and reading. And she continues to take on new challenges. “I have a

propensity for getting involved,” she says. “At times, the research and knowledge that is required to complete the task may far outweigh the monetary compensation, but the knowledge gained is priceless.”

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Driving the Power of Knowledge

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