# Big Data Provides Big Opportunities for HIM Professionals

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*By Ann Chenoweth, MBA, RHIA, FAHIMA*

Whew! Another holiday season is behind us and a new year is underway. My biggest takeaway from my holiday shopping excursions was the vast number of healthcare Internet of Things (IoT) wearables and sensors on the shelves. Just a few years ago, counting steps with wireless accelerometers was the rage. Remember when this was first launched in sneakers with an embedded sensor in the sole? When the technology moved to wearable sensors on the wrist, it didn't take long before one in 10 Americans used one of these activity-tracking devices.

I am astounded by the growing number of new sensors and metrics we can now track through our smartphones, including blood pressure, heart rhythm, oxygen concentration in the blood, and several more. This represents a significant foray into the medical sphere, transcending and complementing healthy lifestyles which should not be diminished in emphasis. But with so many important chronic conditions, it's especially important that we can track these vital indices.

According to a 2015 report from [MarketResearch.com,](#) the healthcare IoT market segment is poised to hit $117 billion in 2020. The new movement of "patient-generated data" has just begun. It has immense potential—not just to help patients take on a far more important role in their own healthcare, but also the particular advantage of having context for their medical information from their daily lives. As this takes hold, it will require healthcare organizations to take a Big Data approach to capturing, storing, and analyzing the enormous volume, velocity, and variety of the data that will be cascading into the healthcare realm.

The move to Big Data provides HIM professionals with significant opportunities for advancement. The demand for HIM professionals who can think critically, pinpoint meaningful insights in a noisy Big Data environment, and lead their employers through their growing pains with a firm grasp of information governance principles will find themselves in very high demand. Professionals who can apply HIM principles and data management skills to Big Data implementations will have the most growth opportunities.

To meet future healthcare market needs and better define healthcare analytics roles, HIM professionals must exploit our knowledge. If we take a leadership role in this domain, our employers will be more effective at implementing Big Data solutions and achieving desired outcomes. HIM can serve as a key stakeholder in advancing the strategic use of Big Data across the entire healthcare ecosystem.

Ten years from now job competencies such as analytical thinking, research capabilities, and risk management will be significantly more important to HIM professionals than they are today. Experience with health data interoperability, terminologies, Big Data analytics, electronic health record management, HIM standards, and design innovation will likely be much more highly sought-after.

We live in a world where Big Data and the IoT will transform how our organizations manage populations and treat patients. The potential value for HIM professionals who take on Big Data is big—and I mean really, really BIG!

## Reference

Fernandes, Lorraine M.; O'Connor, Michele; and Victoria Weaver. "Big Data, Bigger Outcomes." *Journal of AHIMA* 83, no. 10 (October 2012): 38-43.

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