Blending HIM with Health IT: HIM Systems Analyst Plays Role to Fit an Electronic Record

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by Kevin Heubusch, editor-in-chief

David Diaz, RHIA, is an HIM systems analyst at Rady Children's Hospital–San Diego. The role blends information management and information services functions. "It's a little different," he says, but it works well for the facility and its electronic record system.

At Rady, HIM is part of the information management division, not reporting up through a financial track. The department is responsible for coding and other core HIM functions, but it has more IT responsibilities than at many other facilities.

"At our hospital we [HIM] do a little bit of the upkeep on the EMR system," Diaz explains. "We test for new implementations of the system, new functionalities. We do a lot of data analysis, as well—quality control and quality analysis—to make sure the system is up to date, providers have the right information, that people are getting what they should, and that access isn't being given out too leniently."

Providing Technical Support

On any given day Diaz can get a call from "any one of our 3,000 employees saying that something went down, maybe they need their password reset, or their coworker has a document in the system that they cannot see. So we'll go in and evaluate that," he says.

"Doctors will sometimes call with questions about how the system works, why it works the way it does, why their transcribed reports don't go to certain people," Diaz says. "We can provide a little bit of a compliance aspect as well as the technical aspect of why the system is running the way it does."

A Role for the Digital Future

Diaz received his education in HIM, but he has always had an interest in computers. That served him well when he arrived at Rady for a month-long internship in 2007.

"I got acquainted with a lot of the HIM services and what they do here, which was very interesting. I also did a few special projects with the EMR system since they deal with it so heavily here in this department," he says. Diaz's skills matched Rady's unique structure so well that the facility offered him a job.

The close ties between HIM and IS will benefit Rady as it begins a monumental implementation of a completely new electronic record system, a project expected to span the next seven years.

HIM at the EHR Table

Members from the HIM department are coordinating some of the implementation and integration because the new system will need to integrate with the old systems during the transition so that necessary data stay accessible, Diaz says. HIM staff are providing expertise on how current interfaces work as well as "what information needs to be available to which people at which times" during the implementation.

"It's definitely good to see the two jobs come together," Diaz says, given the emergence of the electronic record. "It's good to have the two mixing together a little bit more, especially in a single job."

"In the future, I would hope that jobs like the one that I have right now grow outward a little more, [so that] more HIM-ers have the opportunity for a job like this," he says. "It would be nice to see HIM programs delve a little bit deeper into the IT side of it so more of us can [pursue these] jobs."

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