

Driving Quality through Data Management: Three Stories

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In the past few issues, the *Journal of AHIMA* has presented a special series on opportunities for HIM in the managed care arena. In the final article of the series, we focus on quality improvement (QI) initiatives.

HIM professionals are vitally important to QI initiatives, particularly in the multi-faceted world of managed care. In the three vignettes that follow, HIM professionals will quickly identify the value of their role, especially in multi-disciplinary QI teams charged with identifying a specific area of need and the associated QI process.

Lorraine Tully describes the need to provide a method for members to identify and perhaps select a care provider based on results or outcomes associated with procedures and cost. To successfully achieve this outcome, the data must be valid and reliable and must factor in data parity for accurate comparative purposes. HIM professionals will easily recognize their value in understanding use and application of coding classification systems and groupers. In addition, there is a need to clearly define and delineate “services” by provider specialty and sub-specialty.

Next, Irv Pikelny gives us a glimpse into how an employer coalition uses a variety of data sources specifically to focus diabetes care. As with any QI process, first the issue or problem is identified, followed by use of standardized data sources to determine what should be included in annual diabetes care. The goal for the process is to look at quality patient care in addition to cost associated with hospital admissions that could potentially be avoided through better or earlier diabetes screening and care management.

Finally, Alan Barbell and Patsy Sublett take you through a carefully structured QI initiative developed in response to one facility’s need for an effective medication management program. This type of hospital-wide QI program not only demonstrates its focus on quality of care delivery, but also patient safety and cost control. And it has an obvious element of satisfaction-both for patient and provider.

These QI initiatives can be applied throughout healthcare, regardless of a managed care focus. We highlight them, however, because managed care, with its many facets, continues to have both internal and external drivers that focus on one or all three of these types of QI programs.

External drivers, such as employer coalitions, look at both cost and quality of care delivery. Internal drivers may focus on meeting the needs of the membership for patient satisfaction. Or they may focus on early illness detection and intervention as well as good overall management of typically high-cost chronic conditions.

This series, with its QI perspectives and examples, is meant to inspire HIM professionals to explore current skill sets and identify easy skill transference from traditional HIM roles into managed care. As you read these stories, think about the many internal and external drivers of these initiatives and consider how you can apply similar principles to your organization. This is an opportunity to make a real difference.

[Filtering Our Data to Ease Consumers’ Search](#)

by Lorraine Tully, RHIT

[Business, Medicine Team Up to Improve Diabetes Care](#)

by Irv Pikelny, RHIA

[Reducing Medication Errors with IT and Process Change](#)

AHIMA's Managed Care Series

This is the final installment in the *Journal of AHIMA's* series on HIM and managed care. Read the previous articles in this series:

- "How HIM Adds Value to Managed Care," published June 2001
- "Can You Manage Managed Care?" published July/August 2001
- "Informatics in Managed Care: HIM Adds Value to Data," published September 2001
- "Decision Support: How Managed Care Uses Information to Take Action," published October 2001

All articles are available at www.ahima.org.

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