

EHR Support Group: HIM Professional Cofounds Connecticut's First EHR Roundtable

Save to myBoK

by Chris Dimick, staff writer

Those excited about the electronic health record, welcome to the meeting! Those nervous or stressed, pull up a chair!

That could be a greeting for the Connecticut Health Information Management Association's (CTHIMA) EHR Roundtables, which occur each quarter around Connecticut. Karen Lawler, MPS, RHIA, cofounded the roundtables and says the meetings are designed to allow people the chance to express the positives and negatives of working with electronic health records.

In the process, information is shared that proves vital to doing HIM in the electronic age. "This adds to our value as professionals," says Lawler, the director of HIM and privacy officer at Hospital Saint Raphael, in New Haven, CT. "I think we are all nervous about the EHR, and [we meet] to make sure we are not missing anything."

Pooling EHR Resources and Experiences

Last year, Lawler cofounded the roundtable meetings with fellow CTHIMA board member Cindy Zak. The meetings are designed to offer healthcare professionals a chance to converse, commiserate, share tips, and generally discuss EHR issues. The roundtables are an asset for HIM professionals statewide, Lawler says. This is evident by the robust conversation and overall passion displayed during the meetings.

"It is telling how passionate we are for EHR knowledge and the enthusiasm we have created, [because] at the meetings no one gets up early, no one takes calls, and we always run over," Lawler says.

The first EHR roundtable was held in September, the first of its kind in Connecticut. Though an EHR roundtable is somewhat rare in the national sense, it is essential for the times, Lawler says. At each meeting a central topic such as e-discovery, version control, or workflow analysis is presented for discussion. Two presenters speak at each meeting, and an EHR vendor is invited to showcase a product.

HIM professionals make up just part of the roundtable's attendees. Physicians, insurance professionals, and informatics professionals have also attended. The meetings aim to provide participants with basic training and tools they can take back to their facilities.

"You come away with simple tools, nothing that is going to cause you any anxiety," Lawler says. "Very simple tools that you can apply in your situation no matter where you work."

Picking up Tips

Even a 28-year veteran of HIM like Lawler needs some advice on the EHR once in a while. At Hospital Saint Raphael, she recently encountered a problem-child electronic documentation system. Tools she picked up at a recent EHR roundtable helped her identify the specific issues with the system, she says.

Lawler is the past president of CTHIMA and a current member of AHIMA's Action Community for e-HIM Excellence, or ACE. She is proud of her work on the roundtables, and feels she is helping meet an educational need in the CTHIMA.

Lawler's passion for the EHR comes out of her passion for healthcare. "What better way to begin transitioning healthcare for the patient than to break down barriers that prevent us from exchanging information that is needed?" she asks. The EHR makes her life as an HIM director easier. She always learns something new at the EHR roundtables, which also makes her job more fun.

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