

Enthusiasm for Research Drives HIM Consultant to Success

Save to myBoK

by *Jewelle Hicks*, publications manager

Independent consultant Christina M. Benjamin, RHIA, CCS, CCS-P, is constantly thinking about her next project. Her work involves auditing and coding as well as developing educational resources and clinical documentation improvement tools.

While researching potential career paths, Benjamin was drawn to HIM because of the “great job security.” After graduating from Weber State University’s online degree program in May 2006, Benjamin’s experience helped her land her first medical coding position at Precyse Solutions.

“While still in school, I volunteered at a local acute care hospital and a skilled nursing facility. This experience helped me transition to a paid position while I was in school,” she says. “The combination of having my CCS credential along with a recommendation from an employee at Precyse really helped me get the job.”

The Next Level

Benjamin says that her graduation was a huge turning point in her career. “After graduation, I realized that the work I was doing at my first job was just a small part of what could be done,” she says. She became more involved with AHIMA as well as branched out into tutoring, facilitating CoPs, and editing manuscripts. “I was basically doing anything and everything,” she laughs.

Benjamin is currently enrolled in a master’s HIM program at the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, MN, and is scheduled to graduate in December 2008.

Finding Her Niche

Benjamin was drawn to consulting out of her enthusiasm for research. “I enjoy searching for information on Web sites such as AHIMA and CMS to help me find the original, authoritative source,” she says. “So I really wanted to exercise my research skills as a consultant. The ability to conduct research on any area—no matter what it is—is crucial as a consultant. No matter what the topic is, you have to be able to educate yourself.”

Benjamin is also inspired by “getting involved in the professional development of others by working with coders and auditors who need information,” she says. “I like to look at my involvement as that of an educator; I enjoy teaching equally to learning.”

Looking Ahead

Looking forward to the year ahead, Benjamin anticipates clinical documentation improvement will be a strong focus. She notes that “the implementation of the MS-DRGs taught me that changes can be far reaching. But the bottom line is positioning the profession for those changes.” Benjamin admits that embracing a new way of thinking can be a challenge, “but having your documentation issues in order will make you feel more confident.”

She hopes to contribute to the profession in the year ahead by increasing awareness of the need for documentation improvement. “I’m looking forward to developing tools for both the clinical and reimbursement side,” Benjamin says. “Because larger providers tend to already have electronic resources, I’d like to focus on developing tools for smaller providers who are still using a paper or hybrid record.”

Benjamin encourages her HIM colleagues to “learn as much as you can because the learning process is never ending,” she says. “Changes are inevitable so we must be ready by constantly expanding our knowledge base so we can be confident when

they arrive.”

Article citation:

Hicks, Jewelle E. "Enthusiasm for Research Drives HIM Consultant to Success" *Journal of AHIMA* 79, no.1 (January 2008): 100.

Driving the Power of Knowledge

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