

HIM at the Heart of Healthcare

Save to myBoK

By Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, FACHE, CAE, FAHIMA, chief executive officer

As data becomes central to the process of providing healthcare, HIM finds itself at the center of everything.

This rang true to me earlier this year, when the American College of Healthcare Executives released the findings of its annual survey of hospital CEOs, asking them to rank 11 issues affecting their hospitals in order of importance.

Financial issues came out on top—as they have for 10 years.¹ But look more closely at the list and the areas of concern under each topic and you'll find a litany of issues where healthcare data is a key element. Patient safety and quality. Population health management. Revenue cycle management. ICD-10-CM/PCS implementation. Public reporting of outcomes data. These are all areas where HIM can make a difference.

It's no surprise, then, that the focus of the profession has sharpened on education. Education is our assurance that the HIM profession will not be left behind as the world moves forward—and that we will be able to meaningfully contribute to a world increasingly driven by data.

Going to the Next Level

This month's features offer both pragmatic and blue-sky visionary takes on education.

AHIMA's Reality 2016 initiative has long promoted the value of elevating the HIM profession to a higher academic level. In "[Adapt or Disappear](#)," Mary Butler explores why advanced degrees are needed to keep the HIM profession from following the lead of the dinosaurs and the fax machine. While education is vital to keep HIM relevant, the article also discusses the growth of opportunities available to those HIM professionals who increase their skills.

Rita Bowen, Alisha Smith, and Keith Thomas envision a new career path for release of information (ROI) specialists as patient information ambassadors in "[Evolving ROI Specialists into Health Record Ambassadors](#)." The article prepares readers for the changing landscape of ROI as patient portals proliferate, and offers a direction for these specialized professionals to evolve.

Howard Lee brings us up to date on IBM's "Watson" supercomputer, which is now being taught to understand the complexities of healthcare. In "[Paging Dr. Watson](#)," Lee offers case studies for how Watson is using "cognitive computing" to create better outcomes in cancer research, supply chain management, and consumer empowerment.

Joshua Rubin and Charles Friedman have a different take on the future in "[Weaving Together a Healthcare Improvement Tapestry](#)," which focuses on the creation of the Learning Health System. This system, and the community supporting it, will help foster "cyber-social transformation" of the healthcare system, according to Rubin and Friedman. They note that the lifeblood of the Learning Health System, as it is envisioned, is "shared real world health data and the information and knowledge derived from it."

Which brings us back to where we began: It will take HIM professionals with graduate-level education and strong analytic skills to create new knowledge from the vast array of emerging data. Welcome to the future!

Note

1. American College of Healthcare Executives. "American College of Healthcare Executives Announces Top Issues Confronting Hospitals: 2013." Press release, January 13, 2014. <http://www.ache.org/pubs/Releases/2014/top-issues-confronting-hospitals-2013.cfm>.

Article citation:

Gordon, Lynne Thomas. "HIM at the Heart of Healthcare" *Journal of AHIMA* 85, no.5 (May 2014): 23.

Driving the Power of Knowledge

Copyright 2022 by The American Health Information Management Association. All Rights Reserved.