ICD-10 in the Big Picture

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by Anne Zender, vice president of communications

As a professor at Temple University, Margaret ("Maggie") Foley, PhD, RHIA, CCS, has to have an eye for details. But she also has an eye on the big picture—specifically on ICD-10 and the benefits it could offer to healthcare.

Before she became a professor, Foley was a director of HIM and a consultant for coding and reimbursement strategies. Since then, she's developed an interest in how coded data are used to understand the quality of healthcare across the country and world.

Foley says her long-time interest in ICD-10 likely originated from "something very practical such as not being able to code a new procedure effectively in ICD-9-CM and thinking we really need a new approach," she says. "Also, although I enjoy the coding process, I am more interested in using the information that is generated from it. I think it is unfortunate for data comparison purposes that most other countries have moved to ICD-10 and the US has only done so for mortality reporting."

Setting an Agenda

As a full-time faculty member at Temple, Foley is responsible for developing and teaching several courses in the HIM baccalaureate program. Part of this process recently included a curriculum review that addressed how the program will need to increase the ICD-10 content included in the program.

As a faculty member, Foley is also working to develop a personal research agenda. "I am very interested in the inter-relationships among administrative code sets, such as ICD and CPT, and emerging clinical vocabularies such as SNOMED and LOINC and their potential uses in the EHR," she says. "So I am now working on developing a network of others with the same interests."

Foley initially began her work as an educator when she served as a part-time faculty member in the HIM program at another college for about five years. "When a full-time position became available there, I applied and got the job," she says. A few years later, an opening became available at Temple, and Foley has been teaching there since 1998.

Her biggest professional challenge, she says, is making the shift from being an "HIM educator and practitioner to HIM researcher, educator, and practitioner," she says. "I really enjoy teaching and working as an HIM practitioner. So I believe it's a matter of moving research up on the priority list," she says.

An Active Volunteer

Also on her priority list is increasing her professional knowledge through volunteering. "I've been in the field for some time now and have a good grasp of the basics. I now find that I learn the most through my professional volunteer efforts," Foley says. "Almost everything I have learned about mapping and clinical vocabularies has been through working with other volunteers, writing articles, and serving on AHIMA practice councils." Currently she is working with a group responsible for rewriting the Pennsylvania state HIM association's legal manual. "It's been hard work, but I learn something from my peers on each conference call," she says.

As ICD-10 becomes a more real possibility, how can HIM professionals bring themselves up to speed on the topic? For practitioners that have already received an introduction to ICD-10-CM and -PCS, Foley suggests reviewing the "ICD-10 Checkpoint" article included in each issue of CodeWrite (found online in AHIMA's Coding Community of Practice). "I like this resource because it is very brief and discusses the differences in coding a specific issue in ICD-9-CM and ICD-10," she says. Other good resources include the CMS and National Center for Health Statistics Web pages on ICD-10, she says.

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