Informatics Ahead: HIM Must Rise to the Challenge of Evolving Industry Demands

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By Angela Kennedy, EdD, MBA, RHIA

Health informatics is present in every corner of the healthcare industry. A multidisciplinary approach to decision making, it's no longer just for the research and public health arena. The science and engagement of the health informatics process is one that's critical to the success of healthcare organizations and the common industry goal to improve health and healthcare for all across the continuum.

Data a Good Place to Start

It all begins with the data. Data must be accurate, accessible, granular, and precise. A successful health informatics process requires clean, error-free data. That's a big job for all of us. HIM professionals and informaticians need consistency in the data. Consistency will lead to better information and knowledge for innovations in research and clinical care.

While consistency is important it is only one piece of the puzzle. To complete the picture we must have clean and consistent capture, data must be standard and accessible—certainly not duplicated—and easily retrieved, and decision support systems and technology need to be in place to drive the analytics process. This consistency provides a good foundation for data mapping and data mining processes.

Data mining allows the organization to derive new knowledge for the decision making process. Health insurers use mining techniques to identify cases of fraud and abuse. Healthcare organizations use it to improve quality, lower cost, and improve customer relationships. Physicians use it to identify best practices and treatments for their patients. Algorithms and sophisticated analysis tools allow organizations to collect, analyze, and visualize vast amounts of data. Data mining is particularly helpful when developing predictive models and establishing associations. Rare and unexpected patterns can be revealed, providing organizations with knowledge and innovations that can change lives and impact the world around us.

Information is everywhere. While it is powerful on its own, it must be connected to realize its full potential. Data mapping, creating maps between data models, is another important aspect of informatics. Matching and mapping patient data from different systems and organizations is critical to patient care. Data transformation, identification, discovery, and consolidation are all a part of the process.

Though important, it can be tedious work and requires a skilled HIM professional or informatician to get the job done. Even with the best mapping in place, data can be lost in re-transmissions.

Broad Horizon Ahead for HIM

Health informatics requires HIM professionals, informaticians, physicians, nurses, engineers, statisticians, scientists, and many other clinicians and professionals to work together to create the ideal care and research team for organizations, communities, and the nation.

Great opportunities are ahead for HIM professionals. The need for perfect data calls for information governance. As an AHIMA strategic pillar, information governance is a part of our DNA.

It's up to HIM professionals to take the lead in developing and implementing information governance practice for our organizations. As always, dream big, believe, and LEAD!

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