Once More, Coding at the Crossroads

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The phrase "interesting times" suggests both opportunity and anxiety. These are especially "interesting times" for those of us in coding.

On the one hand, one research organization recently forecast that the global medical coding market will register a compound annual growth rate of nearly 9.9 percent between 2019 and 2024.[1]

On the other hand, Partners Healthcare predicted major changes to be wrought by the advent of artificial intelligence, reducing the complexity of the coding process in the name of reducing administrative burden.[2]

It's impossible to say what the future will hold, but we need to keep our eye on the ball. This is why a rededication to coding seems appropriate for AHIMA at a crucial time for this part of the profession.

This year, AHIMA staff and volunteers are envisioning a future in which AHIMA is the leading voice for both inpatient and outpatient coding. Our goal is to drive the discussions in the marketplace while also considering disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence and computer-assisted coding (CAC). We are also doing in-depth market analysis to ensure that our products and resources will help propel coding professionals into the future.

We've heard that better benchmarking data is needed, too. So this year, AHIMA is conducting a landmark coding productivity study that will encompass not only inpatient and outpatient coding, but the impact of other tasks that coders may be doing as part of their jobs as well. Our goal is to present results during AHIMA's Health Data and Information Conference in September.

Speaking of disruptive technologies: in this issue, "Computer-Assisted Coding Reality Check" by Mary Butler re-evaluates the promises CAC initially offered, including improving coding accuracy and documentation quality, providing a positive return on investment, and making intelligent decisions based on documentation.

The shift to the Patient-Driven Payment Model is opening the door for clinical documentation improvement (CDI) in skilled nursing facilities. In "Revolutionary Payment Changes Prompt Skilled Nursing Facilities to Eye CDI Programs," Lisa Eramo talks to professionals in skilled nursing facilities about why they are implementing CDI programs and about opportunities for HIM professionals.

Healthcare organizations can find themselves weighing competing priorities to keep data protected while supporting innovation. Authors from the Mayo Clinic developed a streamlined and robust review process to share large sets of data while minimizing risk, described in "Third-Party Data Disclosure Risk Management for Healthcare Organizations."

Finally, in "How an AHIMA Credential is Born," Mary Butler relates a story that isn't told very often—the many steps that go into creating a credential using scientific process and vetting by an independent third party. Using the CDIP credential as an example, the article details the long journey from job task analysis to exam.

Notes

1. Research and Markets. "Medical Coding Market – Growth, Trends, and Forecast (2019 - 2024)." March 14, 2019. www.businesswire.com/news/home/20190314005614/en/Worldwide-Medical-Coding-Market-Analysis-Forecast-Report.
2. Partners Healthcare. "Top 12 Disruptive Healthcare AI Technologies Announced." Press release. April 10, 2019. www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2019/04/10/1802229/0/en/TOP-12-DISRUPTIVE-HEALTHCARE-AI-TECHNOLOGIES-ANNOUNCED.html.

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