

Personal View of the Personal Health Record: HIM Professional Sees the Personal and Professional Benefits of PHRs

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by **Jewelle E. Hicks**, publications manager

Pamela J. Beattie, RHIA, is systems analyst and information systems project manager at Grays Harbor Community Hospital in Aberdeen, WA. The facility is currently implementing phase 1 of its electronic health record implementation, and Beattie is excited to be playing a role.

Some of her current projects at Grays Harbor include developing archiving and scanning solutions, expanding the paperless registration process, and creating an online portal to allow access from any hospital application. Beattie enjoys learning new processes and technology. "Making important information available to patients and staff is very rewarding," she says.

Beattie was introduced to the HIM field by a family friend during her senior year of high school. "I was intrigued by the field because I was interested in healthcare, but I knew I didn't want to be directly involved with patient care," she says. "So it was a good fit for me from the beginning."

Early in her career, Beattie realized that many HIM issues were universal.

"Participating in regional meetings was enlightening for me, because I realized different areas were all struggling with the same problems," she says. "When an opportunity opened up in the information technology department, I jumped at it, because this was my chance to help with the implementation of electronic medical records, which was such a big issue that affected many people."

PHR Advocate

Beattie got involved with the personal health record after responding to an e-mail from the Washington state association seeking a state community education coordinator. She has been filling the role since late 2007.

Beattie enjoys the opportunity to gather and share information on personal health records with the public through presentations, training, and Webinars. But much of Beattie's enthusiasm for PHRs comes from using one herself.

"I know from experience that a PHR is a great way to access information for my own family members," she says. "My sister has a medical condition and needed an expensive test not covered by Medicare. In the process of collecting her health information, I discovered that she had already been diagnosed years before with the same condition they wanted to test for. If my sister's information had all been in one spot, the doctors would have had the information they needed sooner."

Beattie hopes that in the future, PHRs will be readily available on Web-enabled devices such as phones and PDAs so that patients will have the information when they need it. But she stresses that "you as a patient have to be proactive to make sure your provider has all of the information in order to give you the best care."

Beattie also encourages members to "start thinking about how you would respond to a request to include personal health record information in a patient's medical record that is brought in on a USB drive or a Web-enabled device. How would you proceed in an emergency situation?" There are many questions, she says, and "we just need to start having the conversation."

"HIM professionals have to start preparing now for more questions on PHRs from the public. It's important to find a balance between maintaining privacy and helping patients," she says.

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