

Power of Data Analytics is Within Reach

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Data are the lifeblood of our healthcare ecosystem, with the potential of enabling organizations to improve care, manage chronically ill patients, lower costs, achieve compliance, support research, increase patient safety, and meet operational and strategic initiatives. Although health information management (HIM) professionals have been in the healthcare data space for years, we haven't had all of the tools, resources, and interoperable systems to transform data into health intelligence. Despite being data-rich, the industry as a whole is still data-poor, as the analytical value of data at times is compromised by a lack of standardized definitions, inadequate interoperability of systems, failure to normalize data exchanged with other systems, and a lack of information governance that provides the foundation necessary to receive a return on information.

With data analytics, physicians can search through past data on a given patient population to make informed decisions on one patient's particular condition or to spot trends within geographic areas. Thus, physicians can provide the appropriate care to prevent illnesses from reoccurring or worsening.

Healthcare Big Data analytics and informatics skills will be among the most sought-after competencies for HIM professionals in the next few years, according to an [AHIMA survey](#) published in the *Journal of AHIMA*. "Most in the industry acknowledge that HIM professionals will continue to see changes in where they work, how they work, the technology they work with, and the quantity and types of data they are asked to manage," the article states.¹

HIM professionals envision themselves taking on more visible leadership roles in the near future as care quality and revenue cycle management begin to lean more heavily on actionable insights generated from Big Data. HIM professionals must re-tool themselves to attain competencies in data analytics and then perform data analysis that creates meaningful and actionable information that aids stakeholders' decision making. They will be able to leverage their knowledge of data capture, data flow, and data quality to facilitate the use of predictive analytics.

One way to demonstrate mastery of this domain is to obtain AHIMA's CHDA certification, which provides practitioners with the knowledge to acquire, manage, analyze, interpret, and transform data into accurate, consistent, and timely information while balancing the "big picture" strategic vision with day-to-day details.

Data analytics is the fuel that will drive decision making to address unplanned readmissions as well as which medical practice to purchase and how a service line can become more profitable or where it should expand to serve a chronically ill population. The demand for healthcare professionals who can navigate this new data-driven space has never been higher.

As Jerry Yang, co-founder of Yahoo, said in an interview with *Business Insider*, "Companies are now in an 'arms race' for data. Businesses that don't adopt predictive [data] will be left in the dust."² Now is our time to realize our data analytics vision!

Notes

1. Sandefer, Ryan et al. "Survey Predicts Future HIM Workforce Shifts." *Journal of AHIMA* 86, no. 7 (July 2015): 32-35.
2. Kim, Eugene. "One of the last things Jerry Yang did at Yahoo helped turn him into a prolific investor." *Business Insider*. June 30, 2015. www.businessinsider.com/why-jerry-yang-is-obsessed-with-data-analytics-2015-6.

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