

Power of Knowledge: QI Manager Uses Data to Drive Performance

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by Jewelle Hicks, newsletter editor

As vice president of quality and improvement for Child Health Corporation of America (CHCA) in Shawnee Mission, KS, Cheri Throop, RN, RHIT, MHSA, CPHQ, is part of a business alliance of the leading children's hospitals in the country. Her role at CHCA allows Throop to work locally and nationally to ensure pediatric quality and safety. In addition to working directly with CHCA hospitals, Throop is part of a number of collaborative groups, including the Joint Commission and the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Healthcare Institutions, that work to identify and promote the use of appropriate pediatric standards and measures for performance improvement and accountability.

Strong Foundations Yield Success

Throop started her career as a nurse in the neonatal intensive care unit and credits this position for teaching her the importance of "the power of collaboration and teamwork focused on a patient who is totally dependent." After a few years running licensed day care centers for special needs children, Throop reentered the world of pediatric nursing just as the field of quality assurance was emerging. To prepare for this career change, she completed her undergraduate and graduate studies, received several certifications, and learned the competencies and skills required in the quality management field.

During this time Throop credits a mentor with exposing her to HIM and encouraging her to pursue advanced education. "I continue to be blessed with mentors who are willing to answer my questions and challenge my thinking as I delve into new research and development initiatives," she says. Throop stresses that her mentor opened doors that she has tried to keep open by mentoring others. Over the course of several years, she advanced up the quality management career ladder by managing, directing, and administering various hospital-based programs.

Defining a Leadership Role

As with any leadership position, Throop needs to scan huge volumes of information and condense it into usable knowledge. Some of her "tried and true tips" for keeping up to date while managing an abundance of information include signing up for a national e-newsletter, applying to be a presenter at an upcoming conference instead of just attending, and, once a week, reading an article from a professional journal as soon as it arrives. Throop believes this plan has enabled her to learn, continue to be efficient, and stay abreast of opportunities.

Her biggest challenge, Throop says, is the difficulty of saying no to potential projects. However, she is quick to emphasize her goal is always to "keep an eye on strategic goals" in order to maintain organizational focus.

The most rewarding aspect of her job, Throop says, is the knowledge that "data used to identify an improvement opportunity are valid and reliable and the measurement used to monitor change really reflects hospital performance."

An Exciting Future

Throop sees nothing but growth in the future of quality improvement. She expects that efforts to drive performance and reduce the risk of medical errors will only increase. "Quality is no longer assumed but rather evaluated based on clinical decision support rules," she says. Her positive view of the future is evident. "I see perceived barriers as opportunities," she says. With such a skilled professional working in quality improvement, those barriers are likely to be few and far between.

Article citation:

Hicks, Jewelle. "The Power of Knowledge: QI Manager Uses Data to Drive Performance."
Journal of AHIMA 76, no.2 (February 2005): 92.

Driving the Power of Knowledge

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