

'Quality is Job One' for CPHQs

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by Cheryl Smith

"Quality" is a buzzword in many industries, but it has particular resonance in healthcare. As a result, healthcare quality has its own certification, which overlaps many areas in which HIM professionals have expertise. Here's an overview of the credential and how HIM professionals can get more information.

Why a Certification in Healthcare Quality?

The designation of "Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality" (CPHQ) recognizes professional and academic achievement by individuals in the field of healthcare quality. Its comprehensive body of knowledge includes quality management, quality improvement, case management, utilization management, and risk management at all employment levels and in all healthcare settings.

The CPHQ is the internationally recognized and accredited competency-based credential for the healthcare quality profession. Currently, more than 7,000 active CPHQs are at work in the United States and overseas.

I Have an HIM Credential-Why Would I Want a CPHQ?

HIM professionals who are interested in expanding their scope of influence, adding to their skill sets, or simply doing something new in the context of lifelong learning may find that specializing in an area such as quality helps them reach these goals.

The CPHQ credential is a logical progression for the HIM professional working closely with quality reviewers, auditors, and risk managers or in performance improvement or other areas of quality management. The HIM professional's education, training, and experience provide a solid framework to becoming, among the many options available, a certified professional in healthcare quality.

How Do I Become a CPHQ?

The healthcare professional interested in certification is required to have a minimum of two years of full-time experience and to pass the CPHQ examination, which is offered each November. Administered by the Healthcare Quality Certification Board (HQCB), the exam is a written, comprehensive, job-related, objective test consisting of 125 multiple-choice questions that test the candidate's abilities to recall, apply, and analyze information.

The examination's content covers a variety of areas, including information management, particularly design and data collection and analysis and interpretation of data.

Who Can Take the CPHQ Examination?

Healthcare professionals meeting the following education and experience requirements are eligible to sit for the CPHQ examination:

- Education: Associate, baccalaureate, final, master's, or doctoral college degree in any field or Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) or Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) or Registered Nurse (RN) license or license in practical nursing (LVN or LPN)
- Experience: Minimum of two years full-time experience or its part-time equivalent (4,160 hours) in quality improvement, quality management, case/care/ disease/utilization management, or risk management activities within the last five years

How Can I Learn More?

The CPHQ candidate handbook, which contains the application form and information specific to the next exam, is available by May 1 each spring. To receive the 2001 Candidate Handbook, contact the Healthcare Quality Certification Board (HQCB) at P.O. Box 1880, San Gabriel, CA 91778, USA; phone (800) 346-4722; or send e-mail with name, address, and phone number to CandidateHandbook@CPHQ.org.

For additional information on the CPHQ examination, visit the HQCB Web site at www.cphq-hqcb.org or the National Association for Healthcare Quality Web site at <http://www.nahq.org/>.

HIM Professionals Know Quality

HIM professionals are well positioned to take the CPHQ exam, according to data from the Healthcare Quality Certification Board. Demographic information from the 1999 certification exam shows that RHITs and RHIAs had high first-time passing rates compared to other types of candidates:

Educational Level	# First-time Candidates	Repeat Candidates	Total Candidates	% of First-time Candidates Passed
RHIT	11	6	17	90.9
RHIA	18	1	19	66.7
Diploma in Nursing	51	12	63	58.8
LPN/LVN	7	5	12	28.6
Physician	10	3	13	90.0

Other 1999 demographic information: 857 candidates took the exam. 603 passed, an overall pass rate of 70.4 percent. 74.9 percent of first-time candidates passed.

Source: HQCB Web site, www.cphq-hqcb.org/background.htm

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