

Recognizing HIM Excellence: AHIMA Grace Award Honors Innovation and Leadership in HIM

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Innovative approaches to health information management (HIM) led Kansas City, MO-based Truman Medical Centers to become the 2013 AHIMA Grace Award recipient, announced at AHIMA's 85th Annual Convention and Exhibit in Atlanta, GA, on October 28th before thousands of HIM professionals.

"As an academic medical center, our vision is leading the way to a healthy community. But you need the supporting health information to accomplish it," said Marcia Johnson, MPA, RHIA, associate administrator of strategy, planning, and performance analytics at Truman Medical Centers (TMC) during the award ceremony. "That's why we consider HIM and HIM professionals to be strategic corporate assets."

Named for AHIMA founder Grace Whiting Myers, the Grace Award was first issued in 2012 and recognizes excellence in HIM. This award honors healthcare delivery organizations that demonstrate effective and innovative approaches in using health information to deliver high quality healthcare. Each applicant must submit an application responding to detailed questions about their present and future HIM and technology state. The applications are thoroughly reviewed and evaluated by a select committee and AHIMA staff. Any identifying factors are removed from each application before evaluation begins. The winner is then selected based on technological innovation and advancement.

TMC a Leader in Health IT and HIM Advancements

Truman Medical Centers is one of the largest providers of outpatient care in the Kansas City metropolitan area. The mission to deliver accessible, state-of-the-art healthcare to their community is a top priority that is taken seriously, TMC officials say. It is also the reason that TMC continues to invest in healthcare technology and HIM.

In order to improve patient outcomes, TMC developed a strategic partnership with two leading health IT vendors that aimed to ensure fast and accurate clinical decisions could be made for patients. By implementing technologies such as computerized physician order entry (CPOE), digital radiology equipment, and electronic health record (EHR) systems, TMC has paved the way to providing quality information at the point of care.

TMC values quality, stewardship, diversity, leadership, innovation, and compassion. As a result, their Grace Award application set them apart from others. By accurately and clearly describing their journey toward a fully integrated and functional EHR, as well as demonstrating their commitment to excellence, their drive for positive clinical outcomes, and the creation and application of new knowledge, TMC was able to articulate proven steps in health IT leadership.

"TMC is leading the way in HIM innovation. They are taking the profession to new heights," says Grace Award committee member Julie Wolter, MA, RHIA, FAHIMA, interim director/associate professor at the Doisy College of Health Sciences at Saint Louis University.

About Truman Medical Centers

Truman Medical Centers (TMC) is a safety net, academic medical center, and not-for-profit acute-care two-hospital health system based in Kansas City, MO, with more than half a million annual visits. TMC operates a busy emergency department and Level 1 trauma center and provides specialty and outpatient services. They have received multiple top clinical awards in the area of patient safety, performance improvement, and adult ICU care. TMC has also received a “Most Wired Hospital” award from Hospitals and Health Networks.

TMC’s EHR Journey—From Implementation to Data Analytics

Truman Medical Centers began its journey toward a full EHR with the initiation of a partnership with a health IT vendor in the 1990s. Over the next decade, TMC and their vendor worked together to help the organization become a HIMSS Stage Three organization by 2009. While these improvements greatly impacted workflows and patient care, they had created a fractured, hybrid state as some clinics were fully electronic and others were 100 percent reliant on paper—with each facility maintaining its own health record.

At that point, TMC leadership made the decision for the benefit of their patients and the need to drive the organization forward to pursue a fully electronic health record, says Seth Jeremy Katz, MPH, RHIA, corporate director of HIM at TMC. The organization branded the project Q6 (Quality to the Sixth Power) to represent the six aims of the Institute of Medicine that acted as the guiding principles for their EHR development.

Over the course of the next 12 to 18 months, TMC underwent a major transformation by implementing its vendor’s EHR across the organization and, in less than three years, moved from a HIMSS Stage Three to a HIMSS Stage Seven. TMC Hospital Hill and TMC Lakewood became the first and second hospitals in Kansas City and the second and third in the state of Missouri to achieve this recognition.

“During the conversion process, more than 5,500 staff members were trained and we deployed more than 1,300 new devices which helped automate TMC’s more than 50 clinics and 23 inpatient units,” Katz says. “Since fully converting to an EMR, TMC accumulated over \$12 million in benefits that range from cost savings [like] supplies, FTEs, space, to improved clinical outcomes [such as] reducing falls, pressure ulcers.” From a direct HIM benefit standpoint, the organization has had a 9 percent increase in coder productivity, saved more than \$370,000 in physical real estate costs through the elimination of paper filing rooms, and seen an expense reduction of more than \$70,000 through decreases in supply costs.

“The HIM department has been able to take the data from our EMR and become heavily involved in strategic planning, business intelligence and data analytics, including leading the Community Health Needs Assessment, the annual Missouri Hospital Association survey, and the annual TMC business plan,” Katz says.

TMC’s Analytics Coordination Team, a multi-disciplinary committee that includes HIM, nursing, physicians, IT, patient accounts, decision support, budgeting, and the project management office, is responsible for the organization’s data governance program. A HIM professional serves as the chair of the team. The group’s purpose is to create, update, and streamline the policies, strategies, people, and technologies for quick, high-quality and meaningful business decision-making. HIM moved into this work by having a staff member with a RHIA in a strategy position that is entrenched in the organization’s Leadership Strategy Committee. Also, HIM worked to embed itself in information processes across the organization. While this can sometimes require effort for HIM to get a seat at the table, it is a natural progression for organization leadership to turn to HIM as a springboard for ensuring concepts are implemented in reality. Where there is information in the organization, there is and needs to be an HIM professional involved, according to TMC’s philosophy.

HIM Operating Traditional and Cutting Edge ROI

TMC utilizes a health IT solution to track and prevent patient falls and pressure ulcers, improving the patient’s experience while decreasing added hospital days. “[Our systems] take clinical documentation from nurses, assess the captured information and provide alerts, initiate care plans, and monitor the patient’s status, ensuring we’ve followed the proper

protocols backed by medical evidence to avoid these unnecessary conditions,” Katz says. “As an example of how powerful this tool has been, before implementing [our system] TMC’s hospital-acquired pressure ulcer rate as a ratio of discharges was around 6 percent. Since implementation, the rate has significantly decreased, now averaging less than 2 percent. This has helped to provide better clinical outcomes, higher patient satisfaction, and increased patient safety.”

When it comes to patients accessing their health information in a timely fashion, TMC has multiple avenues. As always, patients can walk into the release of information department and at no cost obtain copies of their health record. Additionally, TMC has rolled out a patient portal where patients can use any device with an Internet connection to view their electronic records, schedule an appointment, or ask for prescription refills. TMC recognized that HIM has the appropriate knowledge and skill set for processing health information disclosures. So HIM was given ownership of the personal health record (PHR) and patient portal since it was viewed as another method for releasing information.

Recently, TMC entered into the Lewis & Clark Information Exchange, a HIE based out of Kansas City, MO, that will allow TMC to better share patient information between providers to ensure patients are appropriately cared for inside and outside of TMC, officials say.

Academy and Coding Corner Highlight Emphasis on Education

TMC has developed the award-winning Corporate Academy that provides hundreds of different classes and curriculums, across various subject areas, to all staff as an opportunity to continuously grow and learn. Employees can take a course in Microsoft Excel or earn their MBA through a partnership with a local college, with many of the classes offered free or at a reduced cost to staff. TMC provides scholarships and tuition reimbursement for staff as a means to promote continuing education.

The TMC HIM department partners with local colleges to support the HIM field both through adjunct faculty/guest lecturing and taking students for internships/mentorships. The HIM department has built internal websites to drive education, such as the Coding Corner, which houses archived audio seminars which staff can check out for continuing education credits, articles relevant to HIM interests, and a discussion board where coders can discuss interesting or difficult cases. From an ICD-10-CM/PCS perspective, TMC is providing all staff with their ICD-10 education at no cost.

“This year’s recipient, Truman Medical, demonstrated current and future strategic health information management excellence and demonstrates strong HIM leadership in shepherding the electronic health record while advancing the HIM profession,” says Gloryanne Bryant, BS, RHIA, CCS, CCDS, CDIP, 2013 Grace Award judge and national director of coding quality, education, systems, and support for the Kaiser Foundation.

Grace Award Finalists and Honorable Mentions

Truman Medical Centers was named the Grace Award winner from a field of over 30 applicants, all of which exhibited leadership in the HIM profession. “I was impressed with the high level of participation in EHR planning and implementation by the HIM department during all of my Grace Award applicant reviews,” says Barbara Odom-Wesley, PhD, RHIA, FAHIMA, Grace Award judge and senior professor at DeVry University. Jane Duckert, MA, RHIA, director of health information management at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics (the 2012 Inaugural Grace Award winner), says this year’s Grace Award applicants clearly demonstrated their commitment to promoting the HIM profession within their organizations “as well as laying the groundwork for future HIE success within their regions.”

“All have embraced their EHR journey and are working diligently to leverage the benefits into improved patient care, cost savings, and efficiency gains,” Duckert says.

After much deliberation, the award committee narrowed down the applicant pool to TMC and four additional finalists:

- Boston Children’s Hospital
- University of Mississippi Medical Center
- Children’s Hospital of Colorado
- Ochsner Health System

Boston Children's Hospital

Boston Children's Hospital (BCH) is an integrated electronic system and achieved HIMSS Analytics recognition in November 2010 as a Stage 7 site, reflecting its degree of automation and lack of paper processes. The level of integration of health information across the spectrum of care in the system is unparalleled, BCH officials say. This allows BCH to provide health information in a timely and efficient manner, which clearly improves patient care, BCH officials say.

BCH's PHR, called MyChildren's, addresses unique legal and ethical requirements of pediatric and adolescent patients. The PHR gives patients and families the ability to access and track medical information and actively participate in care, such as manage ambulatory appointments, send secure messages to clinical providers, view and pay bills online, and update demographic information. MyChildren's has been recognized nationally as a prototype for developing pediatric environment PHRs.

Partnering with key community organizations, this innovative program improved patient care with home visits and environmental interventions along with advocacy for public policy changes to improve the health and quality of life for children with poorly controlled asthma. The Asthma Action Team empowers and educates patients and families on how to live active, healthy lives. An electronic registry keeps hospital care providers informed of details of each child's history and asthma management plan. The combined efforts and patient-centered asthma care has resulted in a significant reduction of asthma admissions and asthma-related emergency department visits at BCH.

At BCH, the health information available through the EHR has improved the quality of care and accuracy of research. Examples of this include:

- Following the implementation of CPOE, verbal orders were reduced and sustained at 1.2 percent
- The medication tracking module follows all events related to each new medication, from prescribing to administration
- MAR safety view in the EHR includes warning icons, clear visibility of last given/next due dosing information, grouping of multiple orders for the same medications, and links to the online formulary
- A seamless integrated view to all health information

The BCH HIM department was a key leader in the implementation of the EHR and its ongoing improvements.

University of Mississippi Medical Center

The University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) has been live on the EHR for nearly a year and a half, and the hospital is enjoying phenomenal success, according to hospital officials. Within months of go-live, clinicians were demonstrating strong adoption of the EHR and new electronic methods of communication. An example is the rate of transcriptions, which dropped from more than 9,000 dictations per month to less than 1,000 per month with a corresponding annual decrease in costs of more than \$1.2 million. The drop can be directly attributed to the physician's use of discrete data fields, templates, and other EHR tools that eliminate the need for transcription.

"Now entering our second year on a fully-integrated EHR, the University of Mississippi Medical Center continues to drive improvements focused on patient safety, such as preventing pressure ulcers and providing rapid responses for chart corrections," says Leigh Thomas Williams, CPC, CPHIMS, director of revenue cycle and HIM at UMMC. "As we enter 2014 and prepare for ICD-10, we are pushing the limits of the EHR to provide our physicians with an EHR environment that supports their learning and improves care communication and coordination for our patients. "Technology has enabled such innovative approaches to common issues, it's important that we prioritize our initiatives so we're bringing the most good to our patients as quickly as possible."

As UMMC officials look to the future and ICD-10, they are hopeful that physician queries and improved communications through the EHR will allow for focused clinical documentation improvement efforts with tangible improvements in physician charting.

One of the great HIM achievements during their EHR implementation was consolidating the Master Patient Index (MPI), which had previously been spread over three separate entities. At go-live in June 2012, the MPI had 140,000 potential

duplicate entries, but as of the time of application, UMMC had less than 11,000 outstanding. This combined with the improvements in care coordination and communication make the EHR an effective patient care tool, UMMC staff found.

Children's Hospital of Colorado

At Children's Hospital of Colorado (CHCO) the EHR has been instrumental in providing health information that supports and contributes to the patient-centered model of care. Patients complete a learning readiness assessment that follows the patient and alerts the care team how the patient and family members want information presented. Their MyChart system allows the patient/family to view medical information as needed, and to communicate and upload pictures for the physician. This assures that information is provided in a timely fashion and is accomplished by entering information in real time in an EHR. It also enables the physician to print an aftercare summary for the patient/family at discharge. CHCO provides health information through printing, faxing, and mailing which can be delivered on paper, disk, or flash drive. CHCO meets the state guidelines of providing information to patients within 10 days of their request with an average of three to four days. Whenever possible they provide the information at the time of the patient request, eliminating the need for the patient to return to the hospital.

CHCO is a nonprofit that ensures healthcare quality for Coloradans through a cost effective and secure implementation of health information exchange and the use of a patient/provider portal. In 2013 CHCO planned to upgrade to the most current clinical documentation tools available. They utilize mobile technology that allows physicians access to patient information when they are away from the traditional workstation. With its EHR documentation modules, CHCO is greater than 90 percent electronic. CHCO discovered early in this journey a document imaging solution would be needed to support the hybrid record. To support utilization of electronic access to the most recent paper records, a strategic decision was made to have a vendor back scan two years of historic IP, emergency department, and ambulatory surgery records which eliminated the need for a file room at the new hospital.

HIM uses modules of the EHR including release of information, chart analysis, chart deficiency, chart completion, and coding and abstracting. The chart deficiency module has the capability to auto assign a deficiency based upon an event. The electronic record with auto-generated deficiencies for chart completion has drastically reduced physician suspensions and the Joint Commission delinquency rate to a yearly average of less than 2 percent.

CHCO implemented a clinical documentation improvement (CDI) program in 2013 where physicians led 51 documentation improvement training sessions for providers. Upon completion of each session the physician trainer rounded with the physicians and provided feedback where specific and detailed documentation could be enhanced. CDI specialists in the HIM department work concurrently with providers requesting clarifications for documentation improvement with the intention to reduce retrospective queries.

Ochsner Health System

Ochsner Health System's HIM management quickly realized that HIM needed a "seat at the table" for the evolution of the EHR. A proposal was organized and discussed with the CIO that allowed HIM to be at the front of EHR implementation instead of the back. The HIM assistant vice president, with the support of her boss, the vice president of finance, was 50 percent deployed to the EHR project as one of three project directors. This decision was fully supported by the various HIM directors and managers through their taking on extra responsibility during the project. This allowed the assistant vice president to concentrate on building the foundation for HIM to remain relevant in a very IS-driven environment.

Within the first few months, it became clear that not only should the core HIM and electronic Master Patient Index (eMPI) build belong to HIM, but also the security and master user file projects as well. As the project evolved, the HIM EHR project added several staff members to its team to build the HIM core modules. The HIM Data Governance Team, which had been established several years prior to the EHR implementation, was created to help systemize the various legacy acquisitions via eMPI, physician master, and access responsibilities. The HIM department grew in number as permanent owners and support for the EHR modules was added.

The optimization phase of Ochsner's EHR journey includes:

- Implementation of computer-assisted coding/CDI in the 3rd quarter of 2013

- Preparation for ICD-10 from the EHR documentation, financial, statistical, and educational standpoint for the entire organization (HIM directly owns these projects)
- Centralization of several HIM functions that could now relocate out of the facilities to create efficiencies and allow for needed clinical space

Ochsner's HIM professionals said they believe it is important that records remain legible, dated/timed, always accessible, and rarely delinquent, all of which contributes to the quality of patient care. The HIM department recently created an EHR Quality Team. This team is responsible for all chart correction activities in the EHR as well as monitoring and bringing forward inconsistencies between facilities and providers in order to present a patient-centric product to the users. HIM's involvement in auditing and optimizing CPOE has been valuable from a regulatory and coding perspective while impacting quality of care. "Ochsner has continued to support the evolution of HIM from a very large series of file rooms and clerks to a much smaller but higher level of EMR experts," says Vicki Kaplan, RHIA, assistant vice president of coding and health information at Ochsner.

Nominate Your Organization for the 2014 Grace Award

Through all of these stories and experiences members of the Grace Award Committee saw a common theme of HIM operational excellence. The HIM leaders honored by award nominations have worked hard to ensure HIM has a "seat at the table," before, during, and after an EHR implementation. This takes strategic forethought, planning, and vision, and is appreciated by all HIM professionals during a time of colossal change in the profession. The Grace Award Committee has encouraged other HIM professionals and facilities to share their success stories through the 2014 Grace Award process, which kicks off in March 2014. Visit www.ahima.org/grace for more information.

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