

# Rolling Out Electronic Document Management: HIM Director Stresses Importance of Preparation, Questions

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*by Jewelle Hicks, publications manager*

As the director of health information management and privacy officer for Boca Raton Community Hospital in Boca Raton, FL, Roseann Webb is responsible for clinical documentation and revenue management at the 394-bed facility. Webb, MNM, RHIA, LHRM, knows the importance of looking to the future while still maintaining her current day-to-day responsibilities. The hospital is planning for a stand-alone cancer center in 2008 as well as an expansion to 530 beds in 2011.

In addition to long-range planning, another large project on Webb's radar is the upcoming rollout of the hospital's new electronic document management system. The system is designed to ensure compliance while capturing and indexing patient information. It will also provide secure remote access.

## The Importance of Groundwork

As Webb and her staff prepare for the rollout later this year, they are continuing to maintain their current form-design program. This system "allows the hospital units and treating areas to print out prepopulated forms already complete with patient demographic information," she says. "This has proven to be a significant time-saver and eliminated the need for labels and addressograph cards."

Webb says that the process of rolling out the program offered a few lessons, the most important of which was the necessity of "having frequently used forms ready prior to implementation. I cannot stress enough the importance of forms, forms, forms," she says. "We were not ready in advance and are trying to play catch up with form design, development, and bar coding."

## The Importance of Reaching Out

While preparing to implement the hospital's document imaging system, Webb learned the importance of reaching out to other members of her staff as well as other departments. Her main take-away for other HIM professionals is "don't be afraid to ask for help. The process was intimidating because I had not done this before. I also had to realize that if I did not ask for help the installation would not run smoothly," she says.

"Fostering and maintaining a good relationship with your IT department is crucial and ensures everyone is all on the same page," Webb notes. "I have a great relationship with my IT staff; we meet regularly and work well together. Communication is very important to the success of your installation."

Webb recommends preparing staff for the change in workload as much as possible. "I tried to do this with demonstrations and staff meetings, but I think there are still some questions and concerns about who does what that we are still answering," she says.

She also stresses that it is perfectly acceptable to ask for outside help. "If you are unfamiliar with the requirements you need to go live..., I strongly suggest hiring a consultant familiar with the process to perform a gap analysis," she recommends. "This will allow you to see what areas need development prior to going live."

Webb recognizes that the future of the electronic health record will be a collaborative effort. "You can't do it all alone," she says.

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