

Seeing Informatics in Action

Save to myBoK

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Last year, as AHIMA developed our strategic plan, we began to use the phrase “transforming data into health intelligence.” It’s a familiar concept, but what does it really mean? One way to understand this idea is by looking at one of AHIMA’s strategic pillars—informatics.

The strategic plan notes that the focus in healthcare is shifting from the ability to collect data to the ability to use it effectively. As HIM professionals we need to be able to provide “instant access to intelligence that can drive clinical and administrative decision-making in real time.”¹

Information as an Asset

In the literature, definitions of “informatics” are numerous. In fact AHIMA teamed up with the American Medical Informatics Association in 2012 to produce a joint article that notes “the word informatics was accordingly tied to biomedicine from the outset” and has continued to evolve. The article goes on to note that both associations “jointly embrace the following brief definition of biomedical informatics: The interdisciplinary field that studies and pursues the effective uses of biomedical data, information, and knowledge for scientific inquiry, problem solving, and decision-making, motivated by efforts to improve human health.”²

For HIM professionals, informatics is in some ways a continuation of work we’re already doing. Our focus is ensuring the integrity of healthcare data, and many HIM professionals are comfortable with doing that.

The next move is to realize that information can be used as an asset to benefit our organizations—to improve performance and drive strategy. As we consider what is known in healthcare as the Triple Aim (improving cost, quality, and population health), it becomes clear how its success depends on the ability to turn data into knowledge.

Emerging Informatics Opportunities

The articles in this issue offer a snapshot of where we are in the process. In Mark Crawford’s “Making Data Smart,” he describes the evolving discipline of applied informatics and how it is taking a critical role in the new healthcare landscape. “Recognizing HIM Excellence,” by Kathy Downing and Lou Ann Wiedemann, profiles Truman Medical Centers, the recipient of the 2013 AHIMA Grace Award, with special attention on how the organization’s emphasis on the importance of health information has contributed to its success. Lisa Eramo takes a look at the difference between the US and Canada, with their two different reimbursement models, when it comes to coding and CDI in “Peeking Over the Fence.” And in “New Name of the HIM Game,” Kelly Abrams, Kathy Giannangelo, Sue Schneider, and Rita Scichilone examine the emerging opportunities of terminology asset management, including required competencies, preparation and training, and ways that HIM professionals can get experience in this area.

As HIM evolves, the definition of informatics will evolve too, past our previous assumptions. Let us know your stories of informatics in action.

Notes

1. AHIMA. “[Drive the Power of Knowledge: 2014-2017 Strategic Plan](#).” 2013.
2. AHIMA and AMIA. “[Joint AMIA/AHIMA Summary of their Relationship and Links to the Informatics Field](#).” January 16, 2012.

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Driving the Power of Knowledge

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