

Stepping into New e-HIM Roles: The e-HIM Transition Changes HIM Roles and Responsibilities

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The migration to EHRs changes the design and operations of traditional HIM departments. Every HIM function performed to support the paper health record today must be re-engineered.

HIM professionals must assume a leadership role in transforming these functions. The time is now to analyze and visualize documented and undocumented intra- and interdepartmental HIM functions to understand the current and future state of the HIM department while ensuring HIM best practices and standards are consistently maintained.

As EHRs become predominant, many HIM departments will become virtual. A virtual environment offers many operational and financial advantages, but it does not mean the HIM department will disappear. The HIM department will remain present with job roles such as document imaging and customer support.

However, the increase in virtual departments will challenge HIM directors and managers to not only manage new workflow processes, but to do so remotely. It will require executive leadership's active engagement and support to successfully transform to a virtual environment.

New HIM Roles

HIM professionals are now stepping up to the plate with new responsibilities that require leadership, management skills, and IT knowledge. Roles will continue to evolve, and opportunities await HIM professionals who evaluate and upgrade their expertise to keep pace with changing practice.

During the e-HIM transition, HIM professionals will serve a broad range of roles planning, organizing, and managing clinical content, integrity, accessibility, use, and protection. They will serve as project managers, identifying work process improvements and implementation techniques and redefining information management practices. Privacy coordinators, different from privacy officers, will act as directors, creating policy, implementing programs, and directing the goals.

Assessing Health IT Competencies

To help prepare HIM graduates for the e-HIM transition, AHIMA collaborated with the Northern Virginia Community College through a grant from ONC to develop the HIT Pro competency exams, a series of exams that test the competency of the health IT workforce. The exams also allow healthcare providers and other employers to assess the health IT competency of their staff.

The exams are aligned with the roles and training provided through ONC's Community College Consortia program, including clinical/practitioner consultant, implementation manager, implementation support specialist, practice workflow and information management redesign specialist, technical/software support staff, and trainer.

For more information on the exams, visit www.hitproexams.org.

As an HIM professional, you are responsible for your own destiny and should commit to lifelong learning and to continuously upgrade your skills and expertise to keep pace and be successful in the new e-HIM practice. We must build the compelling case for healthcare executives to empower and advance their workforce, placing a high priority on empowering HIM professionals as key leaders in EHR implementation and innovative knowledge management.

There is no I or me, there is only an us-the HIM profession.

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