

Taking HIM's Next Steps: Healthcare Industry Changes Require More of HIM Professionals

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Recently, I spoke at a CSA meeting and explored where we have been. The advances in HIM have been monumental. AHIMA has been working on a white paper to provide insight into HIM's future. This endeavor has been a struggle due to the changing dynamics of the HIM profession.

It could be simply stated, "The best is yet to come"-and come it will to those who embrace the ultimate virtual nature of HIM and enhance their skill sets to accommodate the different media and approaches for the HIM profession.

Monitoring Electronic Entries

AHIMA's tagline "quality healthcare through quality information" guides each of us in our roles today and in the future. Healthcare will be affected by entries made in electronic systems. The integrity and accuracy of those entries will require constant monitoring.

Entries will be made in the wrong patient's encounter; entries will be cut and pasted and provide no additional information to guide the healthcare team as to the patient's progress; entries will include "text-ese" that will be misinterpreted as abbreviations were in the past; and entries will require clarification for others to use the information to perform their jobs.

HIM professionals will need the skills to identify these occurrences, correct them, and address them with the authors in a constructive manner.

In addition, health information will be pushed to others through health information exchanges, and irregularities in the pushed data will surface and raise questions. Registries and other data-collection agencies will pull information through health information exchanges to populate their data repositories and may also find inconsistent data.

HIM professionals will need to understand how to find and assess these irregularities and compare this information to other pertinent data about the patient or patient population it represents.

Expanded Regulatory Initiatives

Regulatory initiatives and oversight will continue to be imposed on the healthcare industry. This means that our information systems will be required to capture more data and edit the information that is collected. This also means that compliance activities within each of our healthcare settings will need to be expanded to conduct internal readiness and monitor performance.

Finally, just keeping up with the regulatory changes will require constant surveillance-a condition to which our DC office team can readily attest. This provides an opportunity for HIM professionals to take on surveillance roles and participate in the compliance activities required to ensure their organizations are on top of the regulations and not being scarred by them.

Our work environment will be changing, but the tenets of our profession-data integrity, data accuracy, and data privacy-will remain. Our educational programs are preparing to provide additional and different course offerings to prepare students for new roles and a new environment. Other venues are also available to gain the skill sets we need in the use of data mining and display technologies, compliance initiatives and approaches, and the architecture and management of information systems and exchanges.

It's up to each of us to make sure we're ready for the next generation of HIM. Are you?

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