



Promoting (and understanding) the Health Information Management Professional

Health Information Management professionals manage the *accuracy, privacy* and *security* of patient records in health facilities across Saskatchewan. The definition of a health record according to the Canadian Health Information Management Association (CHIMA) is: “A compilation of pertinent facts of an individual’s health history, including all past and present medical conditions, illnesses and treatments, with emphasis on the specific events affecting the patient during the current episode of care. The information documented in the health record is created by all healthcare professionals providing the care.”

HIM professionals are also responsible for the data used in creating policy - including healthcare planning, facility funding and research.

To be certified as a HIM professional, one must complete the two year education program and successfully pass the National Certification exam. The learning continues throughout one’s career, as a required number of “Continuing Professional Education” credits must be accumulated every three years. This ensures the professionals in our field are continually learning and developing their knowledge base and skill set.

HIM professionals may fulfill job roles such as:

- Coding Specialist
- Release of Information Specialist
- Health Information Analyst
- Data Base Manager
- Project Manager, Clinical Applications
- Privacy Officer
- Records and Information Coordinator
- Risk Management Officer

In the Health Information department of a hospital, HIM professionals may fill various roles – here is a closer look at a few...

Release of Information Specialists handle many requests for personal health information. These requests may come from patients, physician's offices, other healthcare facilities, insurance agencies, law enforcement agencies and lawyers offices to name a few. In most cases, the patient must give their written authorization to release the requested information. As a HIM professional, it is our duty to "ensure the privacy, security and confidentiality of the patient's personal health information according to federal and provincial privacy legislation (HIPA)."¹

Coding Specialists review patient charts and enter specific information into a database. These specialists use the International Statistical Classification of Diseases (ICD 10) to identify diagnoses and procedures for each patient visit. The main focus is to: *identify the most responsible diagnosis (reason for the hospital stay); any secondary diagnoses that add to the length of stay or required treatment; any in-hospital complications; and if any treatment/surgeries were required.* It is important to capture the information that most accurately represents the reason for the hospital encounter. This creates a "history" of the patient's health status and care received. This data is submitted to the Canadian Institute of Health Information in a de-identified format and is utilized both nationally and provincially for healthcare planning and research.

Health Information Analysts use this data to:

- "Provide presentations to initiate and support clinical, financial, and management decisions within the health and information management sectors".²
- To conduct research for various studies (for example - the effects of NSAIDs on the Gastrointestinal system).

Some responsibilities of the HIMS department **Manager** include:

- Personnel management to ensure sufficient resources to meet departmental mandates
- Workflow management to ensure optimal service provision for our clients
- Development and maintenance of departmental policies and procedures
- Liaison and support for other hospital departments
- To support in *any and every way* the mission, vision, values and goals of the regional health authority from the Health Information Management perspective

There are many changes occurring in the HIM field - one of the hottest topics is the migration from a paper based health record to an electronic one.

¹ 2008 SHIMA Brochure, www.shima.ca

² 2008 SHIMA Brochure, www.shima.ca

The EHR as it is fondly “acronymed” will facilitate improved accessibility to patient health information which will support frontline healthcare providers as they strive to deliver timely and optimal patient care.

The Health Information Management field is a challenging, interesting, rewarding profession. Please visit our website www.shima.ca for further information.

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