



*HIM—A GREAT JOB!*

Lorie McLucas, RHIT

## **(H)ealth (I)nformation (M)anagement**

### *Pros Help Healthcare Organizations Realize ROI*

**L**orie McLucas, a health information management (HIM) professional who specializes in coding, knows how to impact the bottom line. It is through her and her fellow HIM professionals' efforts that healthcare organizations can realize a return on their investment or as McLucas says, "a return on their information."

As team leader of coding and interim APC coordinator at Nebraska Methodist Hospital, McLucas facilitates the timely assignment of ICD-9-CM/CPT codes for optimal reimbursement and coordinates APC implementation to ensure preparation for outpatient prospective reimbursement.

"Through my team's efforts to efficiently and appropriately code patient information for billing, we directly influence the financial success of the hospital," says McLucas, who holds a Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) credential from the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA).

In addition to coding for billing purposes, she and her department also assist the hospital in monitoring internal coding quality to ensure compliance with coding rules through data collection, analysis, and preparation of management reports.

"Accurate coding can also provide data to identify certain diagnoses, co-morbidities, and significant proce-

dures that affect patient care," says McLucas. "This data is often used for statistical quality studies, which help to monitor the quality of care provided to the hospital's patients."

Training is also a major part of her role as head of the coding team. McLucas is responsible for training outpatient coders and providing in-services on coding systems and compliance to appropriate hospital staff. Teamwork, she says, is the key to getting her work done.

"I, like most HIM professionals, do not work within a vacuum. Helping the organization adhere to the highest standards of coding policies and procedures and compliance with federal, state, and Joint Commission compliance takes teamwork," says McLucas. "It takes excellent communication and organizational skills on the part of HIM professionals to involve the organization in these across-the-board efforts."

It is that teamwork, coupled with the coding and compliance know-how of HIM professionals, she says, that give healthcare organizations the real return on their information.

