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Getting Off to the Right Start with Patient Registration

Presenters at AHIMA call for standards, protocols for capturing patient information

Miami Beach, Fla. – Sept. 26, 2018 – Whether it’s waking up to begin your day or having a faultless starting launch in an Olympic sport, getting off the right start is crucial. Accurate and consistent patient registration within a healthcare organization is no different, according to a case study and information being presented today at the [American Health Information Management Association’s \(AHIMA\) 90th Annual Convention & Exhibit](#) in Miami.

“Patient Registration and Doing It Right the First Time” highlights the importance of the patient registration process in ensuring an organization’s interoperability standards. The presentation also uses AHIMA tools and examples to demonstrate the benefits of completing a registration correctly, as well as the implications that can arise if there are inconsistencies.

“When errors are made during the registration process, it can be challenging for health information management professionals and potentially dangerous for patients,” said Nicole Miller, MS, RHIA, CEO of Miller And Miller Associates USA, LLC. “Similar to how an Olympic luge athlete must have a good start to have a great run, completing a patient’s registration process correctly the first time can mean the difference between a good or bad experience throughout a health organization.”

Miller, who is co-presenting with Lee Wise, MS, RHIA, CHCO, health information director at Clinch Valley Medical Center, suggests that an organization-wide protocol be established through an agreed-upon data governance plan. This plan involves the training of all staff – not only those who most often conduct the registration process – to ensure everyone at an organization is well versed in the data standards.

Miller and Wise also suggest several pros and cons regarding the registration process, mentioning that when a patient is initially registered in a system correctly, it minimizes the possibility for duplicate records as the patient moves throughout an organization, lessening the risk of incorrect treatment for the patient and implications for the health system.

“Mishaps in the beginning of the registration process not only have potential consequences for the patient, but they can lead to errors in diagnoses and treatment orders that can cost the

healthcare system millions,” said Wise. “On the other hand, when we get this information recorded correctly the first time and throughout the patient’s continuum of care, we are more likely to achieve success for all stakeholders.”

Some suggested tips for ensuring consistent patient registration throughout an entire organization include:

- Establish standards and processes within an organization for the initial registration entry, in both centralized and decentralized registration departments. This can mean using all capital letters, entering all birthdates or addresses in the exact same format, etc.
- Create a staff specifically to support and maintain this standards system. A data integrity team should always include a health information management (HIM) professional and ensure that daily registrations are correct.
- Put penalties into place if there are errors being made. It is important that the standards system is enforced, so it is recommended that the designated HIM professional provides feedback to employees who have made errors, and acknowledges correct entries as well.

“At the end of the day, the goal of every healthcare professional is to make sure every patient is treated correctly and safely,” said AHIMA CEO Wylecia Wiggs Harris, PhD, CAE. “At AHIMA, we continue to champion the need for standards to ensure consistent and correct health information. It is inspiring to see presenters and attendees at Convention who are moving this initiative forward.”

Miller and Wise’s presentation is one of several addressing electronic health records (EHRs) and interoperability in HIM. For details on additional presentations on this topic and others, visit the [educational tracks page](#) of the AHIMA Convention & Exhibit website.

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About AHIMA

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) represents more than 103,000 health information professionals in the United States and around the world. AHIMA is committed to promoting and advocating for best practices and effective standards in health information and to actively contributing to the development and advancement of health information professionals worldwide. AHIMA is advancing informatics, data analytics, and information governance to achieve the goal of providing expertise to ensure trusted information for healthcare. www.ahima.org