Health Information Research Offers Public Health Promise

New issue of *Perspectives in HIM* also assesses impact of technology on health policy

CHICAGO – October 2, 2013 – From evaluating family history data to identifying and preventing chronic disease in primary care settings, new research published in the Fall 2013 issue of *Perspectives in Health Information Management*, AHIMA’s online research journal, offers a glimpse into the ways health information can be used to improve public health. Other articles in this issue assess the impact of technology on health policy and the industry and offer recommendations for the future.

“AHIMA believes that ensuring the quality and accuracy of health information will make it easier to measure changes in population health over time,” said AHIMA CEO Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, FACHE, CAE, FAHIMA. “In this issue of *Perspectives in HIM*, we learn how researchers are finding new ways to solve challenging problems in public health and technology.”

The Fall issue features the following articles:

“Digital family histories have the potential to enhance population health and become part of future clinical decision support in EHR systems,” write the authors of “Digital Family Histories for Data Mining.” Researchers at the University of West Florida developed a secure online family
history questionnaire to compare participant and family disease rates on common medical disorders with a genetic component. The article presents examples of how family history data might be used for clinical research and population health improvement.

The availability of electronic health record (EHR) data in primary care affords an opportunity for innovative efforts in chronic disease prevention. Researchers at the West Virginia University School of Public Health examined the potential for use of patient registry software to analyze disparate EHR data sets to identify patients at risk for diabetes for the purpose of early detection and intervention. “The crux of the current effort is of practical importance to public health: identifying a sector of the patient population potentially unaware of their risk while providing primary care centers with a tool for more efficient screening,” they write in “Registry-based Diabetes Risk Detection Schema for the Systematic Identification of Patients at Risk for Diabetes in West Virginia Primary Care Centers.”

How do information communications technologies enhance academic collaboration, research, and education in an academic setting? Researchers at the College of Public Health at the University of Nebraska Medical Center surveyed faculty, staff, and students to find out. In “The Role of Information and Communication Technology in Community Outreach, Academic and Research Collaboration, and Education and Support Services,” the authors note that the study points to the need for “more research to integrate the use of these technologies into the field of higher education, especially related to the modern global public health context.”

It is important to evaluate the accuracy of chronic disease capture and the potential reasons for the lack of accuracy because codes used to capture chronic diseases are included in risk-adjustment methods used to compare organizations’ performance measurement data, predict patient outcomes, and adjust for severity of illness. In “Exploration of ICD-9-CM Coding of Chronic Disease within the Elixhauser Comorbidity Measure in Patients with Chronic Heart Failure,” researchers at the University of Utah School of Medicine, the Philadelphia VA Medical Center, and the University of Pennsylvania found that comorbidities representing chronic conditions were significantly underrepresented in the original code assignment for one population. They call for more research to evaluate systemic causes of underrepresentation of chronic conditions and to improve the accuracy of risk adjustment data.
Federal leadership in the form of regulation and oversight (and legislation if appropriate), as well as cooperation from EHR system vendors and healthcare providers are necessary to ensure the development, implementation, and enforcement of comprehensive national standards for the design, performance, and use of EHR systems that reduce serious EHR-related errors, according to AHIMA Senior Director of Coding Policy and Compliance Sue Bowman, MJ, RHIA, CCS, FAHIMA, in the literature review “Impact of Electronic Health Record Systems on Information Integrity: Quality and Safety Implications.” The article examines the impact of unintended consequences of the use of EHR systems on the quality of care and proposed solutions to address EHR-related errors.

Changes in payment methodologies, service delivery models, consumer expectations, and regulatory requirements necessitate that long-term and post-acute care (LTPAC) providers begin their journey toward effective use of health information technology (HIT). In the literature review “Long-Term Care and Health Information Technology: Opportunities and Responsibilities for Long-Term and Post-Acute Care Providers,” researchers at George Washington University note: “To be successful, the question is not if or when, but how to move forward on a journey to maximize the benefits of HIT for the LTPAC community.” The article outlines what providers need to know, financial opportunities and responsibilities, and what providers need to do to succeed.

In “Impact of Radio-Frequency Identification Technologies on the Hospital Supply Chain: A Literature Review,” researchers at Marshall University seek to gauge the recent and potential impact and direction of the implementation of radio-frequency identification (RFID) in the hospital supply chain to determine current benefits and barriers of adoption. Findings show that the application of RFID to medical equipment and supplies tracking has resulted in efficiency increases in hospitals with lower costs and increased service quality. “If barriers to implementation can be overcome, RFID will represent a revolution in HIT,” they write.

About Perspectives

Perspectives in Health Information Management is a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal, referred to by professors, professionals, public officials, industry leaders, and policy-makers. Since 2004,
it has been one of the most credible and respected journals of the HIM industry and is referenced in notable indices such as PubMed Central (PMC), the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health (CINAHL), and Google Scholar. Learn more about the submission guidelines and the manuscript review process.

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Celebrating its 85th anniversary this year, the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) represents more than 67,000 educated health information management professionals in the United States and around the world. AHIMA is committed to promoting and advocating for high quality research, best practices and effective standards in health information and to actively contributing to the development and advancement of health information professionals worldwide. AHIMA’s enduring goal is quality healthcare through quality information. www.ahima.org