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Using Electronic Health Records to Identify Seniors at Risk of Falls

Spring issue of Perspectives, AHIMA's online research journal, features a study that highlights an innovative way EHRs can potentially support public health problem

CHICAGO – April 20, 2016 – Already a complex problem, unintentional falls among seniors is a major public health issue. Identifying patient risk factors by repurposing electronic health records (EHRs) data collected during office visits can potentially help prevent unintentional falls in seniors.

Research in the spring issue of [Perspectives in Health Information Management](#), the online research journal of the [American Health Information Management Association](#) (AHIMA), examines this issue with the study "[Developing Methods of Repurposing Electronic Health Record Data for Identification of Older Adults at Risk of Unintentional Falls.](#)"

"EHRs help doctors make better decisions and engage patients in their care in a way that was not possible with paper records," said AHIMA CEO Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, CAE, FACHE, FAHIMA. "This innovative study in *Perspectives* is just one example of the promise offered by collecting specific data at the time of patient care and then transforming that information into an intelligent approach to mitigating a significant problem."

The authors explore the feasibility of using EHR data to identify older patients at risk of falls. The authors write that, "the primary risk criteria for falls included in the study are biological and behavioral because these data elements are intrinsic to the patient and therefore more apt to be gleaned from EHR data."

In the study, only 3.4 percent of the patients had any indication in their medical record of a previous unintentional fall. The authors write, "given the national statistic that falls occur among approximately 40 percent of adults 65 and older, we can be confident that falls are underreported and/or underdocumented in this sample. ... Findings from this study draw attention to the need for increased emphasis on fall prevention during routine office visits."

The spring issue also features the following articles:

- The descriptive study, "[Health Information Management Leaders and the Practice of Leadership Through the Lens of Bowen Theory](#)," examines leadership in health information management (HIM). HIM professionals have more chances to exercise leadership as healthcare systems across the country are redefining the way health information is collected, processed, used, stored and retrieved. "Results showed that HIM leaders are valued for HIM expertise in electronic health records, privacy, security, and coding; for being the center or heart of the organization; and for commonly valued leadership behaviors and skills including dependability, strategic planning, project management, listening ability, and fairness."
- According to the analysis of survey responses in the research study, "[The Crossroads Between Workforce and Education](#)," academic programs should promote real-world experience through professional practice and/or apprenticeship programs." The authors write that, "more than half of the respondents noted the importance of apprenticeships and funding for these opportunities."
- Policy initiatives are needed to target smaller institutions to bridge the gap in EHR implementation is a key finding in the study, "[Characteristics of Hospitals Associated with Complete and Partial Implementation of Electronic Health Records](#)."
- The study, "[Personal Health Records: Beneficial or Burdensome for Patients and Healthcare Providers?](#)" analyzes the usefulness and effectiveness of personal health records (PHR). The authors find that, "for the PHR to succeed in the U.S. healthcare system, assurance that the information will be protected, useful and easily accessed is necessary." Another study on PHRs, "[Usability of Web-based Personal Health Records: An Analysis of Consumers' Perspectives](#)," compared consumers' perspectives on the usability of two web-based PHRs. The authors concluded that because web-based applications enable the users to access the information at any time and from any location, "web-based PHRs could be a future trend in the development of PHRs."
- Patient identification matching problems contribute to data integrity issues within EHRs. The study, "[Why Patient Matching is a Challenge: Research on Master Patient Index \(MPI\) Data Discrepancies in Key Identifying Fields](#)" looks at the underlying causes of duplicate records and analyzes multiple reasons for data discrepancies between those record matches.

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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.

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 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