The Domino Effect of Data Quality

Health Information Management Professionals Week
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HIM Professionals - Your Data Quality Experts
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There is a growing trend in health care around the paramount importance and relevance of Quality Data.

Our health care system depends on the availability of quality data to support quality patient care. Poor documentation, inaccurate data, and incomplete records can result in errors and adverse incidents. Inaccurate data threatens patient care and safety, can lead to increased costs, inefficiencies, inappropriate reporting, and poor planning and decision-making.

In Canada, Health Information Management (HIM®) professionals are educated in six core competency areas: biomedical sciences; health care systems in Canada; health information analytics; information systems and technology; information and records management; and ethics and professional practice. The HIM expertise includes data classification and coding systems; data analysis, interpretation, and presentation; information confidentiality, privacy, and aspects of security; data quality analysis; and electronic health information management.

HIM professionals are a health system data quality check point. With expertise in data collection and the organization of data, the HIM professional analyzes data and information, identifies deficiencies, redundancies, and omissions and works with clinical and administrative personnel to improve data quality.

Importance of Data Quality

Data submitted by health care organizations ultimately populates numerous databases including those held by Provincial and Territorial Ministries of Health, the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), the World Health Organization (WHO), Statistics Canada, and Health Canada. The quality of the data is absolutely essential. While Data Quality is everyone’s responsibility, CHIMA certified HIM professionals provide the analytical, evaluative and critical thinking to support the entire lifecycle of health information.

Data that is aggregated provides the health system with data for the purposes of patient care, research, clinical education, and financial reimbursement. With the myriad of uses of clinical data, its accuracy is of premium importance. Given the significance of data in decision-making, poor quality data can negatively impact everything from patient care to funding of agencies.

Data Quality Issues

The quality of coded data may be compromised by:

- Missing documentation
- Incomplete clinical documentation (level of specificity not documented)
- Timeliness of documentation
• Illegible documentation
• Use of abbreviations easily misunderstood
• Misinterpretation of coding standards
• Insufficient number of coding staff, and
• Coding submission deadlines requiring coding from incomplete charts.

When the coded data is compromised, it sets off a chain of data quality incidents or has a ‘Domino Effect’ on Data Quality.

**Improving Data Quality**

The content, organization, reliability, and appropriateness of data are the foundations of a health information system. Components include the clinical data (that is, data that relates to direct care such as diagnostic tests or treatment), demographic data (the vital statistics such as client date of birth or gender), and administrative data (including data related to classifications and grouping of like cases and funding). Together, this wealth of data supports health research and epidemiology. Although there are many individuals involved in the collection of this information, the HIM professional is the primary resource to understand, evaluate, and manage this data. Data is a health system asset, and the HIM professional is a key to managing the information.

Data quality begins at the time the information system initiates data collection. Therefore data quality must also include management and evaluation of the processes used to collect the information. HIM professionals must continually review paper and EHR documentation processes and systems to support quality documentation. Data quality is not just an evaluation of what is recorded, it is also the management of the systems that collect and report the data.

Leverage the skills and expertise of the CHIMA certified HIMs in all aspects of Health Information Management, including:

• Overall Records Management (Paper/Hybrid/EHR)
• Data Quality and related initiatives
• Decision Support /Data Analysis
• EHR
• Coding and Data Capture (CIHI/MoH)
• Case Mix
• Activity Based Funding
• Privacy, Confidentiality, Security
• Documentation Improvement Strategies
• HIM standards
• Health Law

There is a positive correlation between quality documentation and quality decision making in health care.
**CHIMA Mandate**

Data quality is closely related to documentation. Good documentation is linked to better health care planning, fewer medication errors, system error detection, appropriate funding, improved regional planning and equitable resource allocation. As electronic health record (EHR) systems are implemented across the country, the integrity, consistency, and accuracy of the data is increasingly important. As a result, the need for more rigorous data quality governance, stewardship, management, and measurement is greater than ever.

CHIMA is seeking a mandate supported by Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments asking that facilities providing health data to important provincial (e.g. MOH) and national databases (e.g. CIHI DAD, NACRS, etc.) use CHIMA certified Health Information Management Professionals only. Certified HIMs are a key resource to a safe and efficient health care system.

For further information regarding CHIMA, CCHIM, or the HIM profession, please go to www.echima.ca.

The Canadian Health Information Management Association (CHIMA) represents approximately 5,000 HIM professionals across Canada and is the certifying body and national association that represents leadership and excellence in health information management.

The Canadian College of Health Information Management (CCHIM), the professional college of CHIMA, is a respected authority for oversight on the rigorous professional education and training offered by the educational institutions through an accreditation process. Certified members, with the professional designation of CHIM, provide a host of valuable information management functions to the health care system.

1 HIM® is a registered trademark of CHIMA