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New Skills For a New Era

Survey Finds Electronic Health Records Key to Transcriptionists' New Career Paths

CHICAGO – July 9, 2013 – New speech and language processing technologies have dramatically changed the traditional work of medical transcriptionists, the health information professionals who prepare the records of patients' health stories from clinicians' dictations.

Eighty-seven percent of medical transcriptionists indicated that in order to transition to documentation roles in electronic health records (EHR), new skills and knowledge gaps need to be identified, according to a survey released today by the [American Health Information Management Association](#) (AHIMA) and the [Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity](#) (AHDI). A separate survey of transcription managers and supervisors showed an overwhelming need to identify transition plans and career paths for traditional medical transcriptionists, as 73 percent indicated no plan was currently in place.

"The skills of a transcriptionist – to listen and be detailed- and research-oriented, with a familiarity of medical terminology and disease process – are still in critical need in HIM departments during this time of healthcare transformation," said AHIMA CEO Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, CAE, FACHE, FAHIMA. "The transcriptionists that can demonstrate agility by moving into a new position can carve out a valuable niche for themselves."

The survey found that the top two job titles transcriptionists are transitioning to are chart integrity auditor and EHR technician/HIM analyst, performing direct documentation into the EHR and auditing for accuracy and completeness. Other promising career paths within HIM for transcriptionists are coding professional and healthcare documentation technology trainer.

More than half of transcriptionists (53 percent) said they were probably or definitely willing to invest time and resources into obtaining an academic degree to transition directly into HIM roles working with the EHR.

"The rise of EHR is just one of many growth areas in health care where the skills of a transcriptionist will be valuable," said AHDI CEO Linda G. Brady, CAE. "Medical transcriptionists, also known as healthcare documentation specialists, are a valuable partner in facilitating successful transitions in how health records are documented. This workforce is well-positioned to identify important quality issues to preserve the integrity of the health record and

serve as subject matter experts who can work with providers to create best documentation practices.”

Other survey findings included:

- The skills considered most important to move into the EHR were communication, quality improvement, and workflow analysis.
- 53 percent of transcriptionists were somewhat willing or very willing to transition into a job in an office environment.
- 32 percent of supervisors indicated a transition plan is extremely or very important to their facility.

AHIMA and AHDI are working together to create model job descriptions for the transition areas identified in the survey as well as other resources to help transcriptionists make the transition.

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About AHIMA

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

About AHDI

With 12,000 members, the [Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity](http://www.ahdionline.org) (AHDI) is the world’s largest not-for-profit association representing the individuals and organizations in healthcare documentation. AHDI’s purpose is to protect the integrity of patients’ health information through continuous workforce development and the support of practitioners and industry partners. Learn more about AHDI by visiting our website, www.ahdionline.org.