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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Mentoring is the focus of the May issue of **Perspectives Online**. The definition of a mentor is a trusted friend, counselor or teacher, usually a more experienced person. In the HIM profession, I believe good mentors make all the difference in the world to the way a new member

starts their career. As I stated in my speech last June at the Annual Conference in Buffalo, "We need to be good stewards of our profession by mentoring those new professionals who have just graduated from college as we were mentored by great professionals ten, twenty, and even thirty years ago." As a new graduate, I had a mentor who embraced the "Medical Record" profession (as it was known at the time) and it was infectious for me. A good mentor will show you the ropes and get you involved in the profession. Those of us with more experience need to be thinking of ways to help new professionals become actively involved in some way - either at our annual conventions, local meetings or as a helper to the local board in some way. Let's use the new professional as a tool to assist us with some of the tasks we may still be intimidated by such as using social media; finding innovative ways to publish a newsletter or just more efficient ways to produce a simple mailing list, mail merge or use your imagination. There are so many tools available today and you can always find someone that has experience with a technology you never thought of before. You just have to ask.

Remember – new graduates represent the future of our industry. Let's use our combined professional experience to make the present better, stronger and more effective while we strive to secure the future.

Please take on new health information students as interns and do your part to make a lasting impact on someone's career by mentoring a student. Give

someone their first opportunity in this business as someone gave you yours. It's time to pay it forward.

To help add to our mentor issue we also wanted to try something new and have a member profile included in this issue. We are trying to bring something different to the newsletter and we hope you enjoy it. See you at the Turning Stone in June!

Julie L. Brucker, RHA CCS

A CAREER OF CHANGE AND ACRONYMS

I am deeply honored by my induction to the **NYHIMA** Hall Of Fame and want to thank those who nominated and voted for me. This occasion has caused me to reflect back on my long career in health information management. It wasn't by chance that the **JCAHO** (now the Joint Commission) and I were born in the same year, it was destiny; . . . or was it the bane of my very existence? Growing up, I knew I wanted to be involved somehow in health care, I just didn't know quite how until 1970. I began my college education, graduated and then sat for the **ART** (now **RHIT**) exam. I anxiously began working, continued my education and, finally, received my **RHA** credential. I was so happy to learn that I wouldn't be called a Records Librarian. Although some of the names that I have been called over the years weren't that much better; e.g., queen of the nitpickers for one!

I was faced, almost immediately, with **MCE** Studies in 1975, which evolved into **QA**, **QR**, **TQM**, and then **PI**. The Medical Staff initially rebelled until I spent countless hours convincing them that the primary motivation was educational in nature. I was pretty good at BS even then! Through the years, I watched **PHL Sec. 18** be passed, many changes made to Hospital Code Sec. 10.8, and Medicare's **COP**. Advanced Directives were legislated (long overdue) including additional acronyms: **LW**, **HCP**, and **POA**; earlier I had met the challenges of the **DNR** Order legislation.

I watched as transcription (my first paying job was as a medical transcriptionist) evolved from little red records to loops, cassettes, "the tank", and to then voice recognition. The medical record itself transitioned from paper charts/medical records (every one of my former students knows that I hate the word chart!) to microfilm, to microfiche, digital scanned records, **EMRs**, and then **EHRs**. And let's not forget **PHRs** - a brilliant concept.

PSRO, later named **PRO** brought us **UR/UM** - another concept challenged by the physicians. The **PPS** included **DRGs** and later **APGs**. **HMOs**, **PPOs** and **POS** sprang up to control costs and change the way health care was to be provided.

I began coding using **SNOMED** and then **HICA -8** (I think) and then later, of course, **ICD-9**. Some of my former employees will gladly tell you that I did not excel at coding. **HCPCS** and **CPT** will remain foreign to me as will **ICD-10**.

Risk Management brought with it **SRIs** and then **NYPORTS**. **SODs** had to be followed by a **POC** response. Life in **HIM** was never static or without opportunities.

On May 14, I attended **CNYHIMA's** annual meeting and heard many new acronyms: **RHIOs**, **PPACA**, **FPL**, **ACOs**, **VBP**, **P4P**, **POA (not power of attorney)**, **AHCA**, **RACs**, **COEs**, **DNFB**, and more. I have to say that I'm happy to be retired and appreciate knowing that there are a lot of younger professionals out there to conquer all these new challenges and to seek out the many opportunities in the offing.

Again, I thank **NYHIMA** and especially **CNYHIMA** for this honor. I was truly at a loss of words (at least briefly) when I received word of my induction. My career in HIM has been fly (and fly to me means awesome)! I would be terribly remiss if I did not mention my professional mentors who have meant a great deal to me over the years: Jane Casamento, Helen Clifford, and Donna Silsbee. Thanks for always being there.

Submitted by Sue Bice, MS RHIA [CNYHIMA]

NYHIMA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

This month we would like to spotlight one of our active NYHIMA members, Ms. Lynn Farnung, RHIT [RRHIMA]. Lynn is a DRG Coding Specialist at Highland Hospital in Rochester, NY, a University of Rochester facility.

Like many professionals in HIM, this career path was not the first for Lynn. In fact, it wasn't even her second pathway. Originally, Lynn attended SUNY Fredonia to study Speech Pathology. She decided not to pursue employment in that field and instead was led to Day Care. Lynn operated a child day care in her home for twenty years. After many years working with young children, she decided to seek a career working in healthcare. Looking for something that would offer a great deal of variety, Lynn did

quite a bit of internet research and decided to enroll in the HIT program at Monroe Community College. Health Information has been a satisfying choice for Lynn. She had considered becoming a nurse, but finds now that HIM is the best of both worlds. The technology is fascinating and Lynn states she may return to school for a degree in informatics.!

Lynn began her HIM employment at Lakeside Memorial Hospital in Brockport, after graduating from the MCC program in 2006. It was a great beginning for her and she has since moved on to Highland Hospital where there is a real family feel to the work environment.

In addition to considering the study of informatics, Lynn is contemplating the CCS exam. Lynn states, "this credential shows that you worked at learning and accomplished something important. The credential is an acknowledgement of skill." She gives credit to her Program Director, Sharon Insero, for being a constant motivating force; a terrific mentor who encouraged Lynn to work beyond her immediate goals and keep reaching.

"What current topics in healthcare are exciting to you?"

"I believe that Personal Health Records (PHR) should be utilized much more than they are now. Consumers should be educated on the importance of involvement in their own care. Our HIM associations should be actively promoting PHRs in the community – telling people why it's important and how maintaining a PHR can help them. If we reflect on the lost medical information following the Katrina disaster in Louisiana, it is easy to understand the difficulty of treating illness and injury in the absence of good medical history. The average lay person may not be savvy about their medical information; and sometimes, the patient is not able to speak for himself due to injury."

"What resources do you rely on?"

Important resources for Lynn in her professional growth are her network of colleagues and, especially, the State and Local Association members. "We have many experts in our associations who care about each other and are willing to share." Lynn is the Facilitator for NYHIMA on the AHIMA Communities of Practice. She has found the CoP to be an invaluable resource for ready information and advice on a variety of HIM topics, especially coding.

"How do you balance life and work?"

"Sometimes, you just have to grind to a halt and restart. There are always people willing to lend a hand. I like to challenge myself continually and keep moving forward."

"What can NYHIMA do to better serve your needs?"

"Get out in the public! Talk to people about what we do and how we serve the medical profession. Speak at community organization meetings. Make HIM better known in the general sense."

"How do you prefer to spend your free time?"

"Right now, I'm getting my house ready for sale. I'm going to move into the city and enjoy my social life!"

Submitted by: Perspectives Editor Director

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A SUCCESSFUL MENTEE

Tennille Schmitt [HIMANNY] is the HIM Coordinator at EJ Noble Hospital in Northern New York. She enjoys the management role of her job and is still learning about each of the varied aspects of HIM as a student in the HIT program at SUNY Alfred. Tennille credits the former HIM Director, Caroline Baker, as her first professional mentor. Having earned an Associates Degree in Medical Office Technology, Tennille was encouraged by Caroline to go further with her education and skills and tackle the role of managing an HIM department. Tennille is looking forward to finishing the online HIT program in the Spring of 2011, and will write the RHIT certification exam soon thereafter.

When asked, "At what point in a career does the mentoring process stop?" Tennille responded that the mentor-mentee relationship is always there but the level of involvement may change. "Having access to the network of professionals who are members of our Local and State HIM Associations is invaluable. When needed, it is easy to identify someone who has the knowledge or skill to help me with a question." Tennille cites her definition of a mentor as "someone who provides more than guidance to the chosen career path – a resource who is always there and continues to provide assistance and whose opinion I value."

Starting out from a point of being totally unaware of the Health Information Management profession and the credentials available, Tennille now serves as the Education Co-Chair for the Northern New York HIM Association. She continues to enjoy her work and looks forward to increasing her knowledge of other aspects of the profession. Mom to two sons, Tennille is expecting a daughter in August. Call her if you want to know how to balance life and work and still enjoy both!

Submitted by: Perspectives Editor Director

A MENTOR WEARS MANY HATS From a Student's Perspective

When I decided to go back to school in my late 40s, I entered the HIT program at Onondaga Community College. After attending my first A&P class, I kept asking myself what in the world I was doing. That same week I had my first HIT class. I was feeling completely overwhelmed and wondering if I had made the right choice, going back to school at my age, when I walked our instructor with a big smile on her face and such a positive attitude.

I stayed after class that night to talk to her and when I started to cry, telling her how overwhelmed I felt, she gave me a pat on the back and told me, "You can do this." There were other times, too, when she

counseled and encouraged me, always with a smile. I don't know how I would have managed to achieve what I did at OCC without her support. I graduated with honors, and feel fortunate that my teacher, Peggy Presbyla, who was such an incredible mentor not only to me but also to hundreds of other students in the program, has also become a very special friend.

Submitted by Lisa Challender, RHIT [CNYHIMA]

From a Mentor's Perspective

Peggy Presbyla, RHIA CHP, has been awarded NYHIMA's first Mentor Award. She is currently the HIM Operations Supervisor at Community-General Hospital in Syracuse and has been an Adjunct Instructor at Onondaga Community College in Syracuse for the past 8 years. Prior to becoming an instructor, she played a significant role as a Clinical Preceptor for OCC. Peggy is the current President of CNYHIMA.

How did you get started in HIM?

25 years ago I was working in a Long Term Care facility as a Driver-Aide in an adult day care program. I met the Medical Records Coordinator one day. Her name tag listed her credentials as ART. I asked her what that was. She explained to me her role and responsibilities. It all seemed so interesting to me. When the clerk position became available in medical records, I applied and started working in her department. She told me about the weekend college program at Maria Regina College. I started school six months later. She taught me everything she knew about medical records. She was my first of many mentors!

In addition to my full time job as a HIM Operations Supervisor at a local hospital, I am also an HIT adjunct professor at Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, NY.

Can you tell us about a time when you were mentored by an HIM professional?

There were so many times, I don't know if I can remember them all. Of course, there was my first medical record supervisor who got me off to a great start. She taught me everything she knew and as I advanced in the HIT program more and more duties were assigned to me. She mentored me on a daily basis. But there were so many others that have mentored me in so many different ways. Some were just a phone call away when I was struggling with something. I have always found encouragement in my peers. A very dear friend was the HIM professional who mentored and encouraged me to go back to school for my bachelor's degree. If it weren't for her, I really don't think I would have ever done it. I was very fortunate to have many mentors in my professional career.

As NYHIMA's first recipient of the Mentor Award, what does the word mentor mean to you?

Being the first recipient of this award is truly an honor. The word mentor is defined as "somebody, usually older and more experienced, who advises

and guides a younger, less experienced person". It has been a privilege and an honor to play a role in educating and cheering on so many new HIM professionals. As an educator I am given this opportunity on a daily basis. Our profession touches so many lives even though this is seamless to the patients that we serve. I take confidentiality and privacy very seriously. The work that we do not only serves our patients but the general public as well. Sharing our profession with new students and anyone that will listen, for that matter, is something I enjoy doing. It is my way of giving back. It is not something I feel requires great effort on my part. More often than not, I feel I learn more from those I am 'educating' than they are learning from me. To be recognized by my peers means a great deal to me. Perhaps this award's existence will create an even greater awareness of the importance of mentoring and encourage more of our members enjoy the mentoring experience.

Tell us about a rewarding experience you have had as a mentor?

I would have to say one of the most rewarding experiences I have had is attending Onondaga Community College's graduation ceremony. To see the students walk across the stage is truly emotional. Knowing that I may have played a small part in helping them achieve their success brings me great satisfaction and pride and is truly rewarding!

It is also rewarding when former students and employees take the time to contact me with a question or just to say hello. Many of the individuals I have been given the privilege to mentor have become dear friends. I find myself calling on them now to help me with issues. It is a win-win situation!

Do you think the need for mentoring ends?

Never! Our profession is one of constant change. There are always new things to learn. This is what makes our profession so exciting. We need to mentor the HIM professionals of tomorrow. I believe experience is the best teacher. Share your experiences with others. Share your successes as well as your failures. I am certain that we all mentor someone on a daily basis without even realizing it. Take the opportunity to take someone under your wing. As the good book says "What you give to others comes back ten fold". This is so true!

Submitted by: Karen L. Fabrizio, RHIA [CNYHIMA]

AHIMA NEWS AND INFORMATION
CCA Receives NCCA Accreditation

The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) has granted accreditation to AHIMA's Certified Coding Associate (CCA) certification program.

The CCA is the only HIM credential worldwide that is currently accredited by NCCA. This gives us a strong competitive advantage in the coding space that we didn't have before. More importantly, it gives our CCA certificants and future certificants greater validation of their skills and knowledge to help them reach their organizational and career goals, as they help provide the industry with quality healthcare through quality information.

The application for accreditation was led by AHIMA's Certification Department – Mike Niederpruem, Jo Santos, Heather Rich, and Lisa Chernikoff – who worked for several months of long hours to ensure we had all of the procedures in place and the documentation prepared to satisfy the requirements of the accreditation process. AHIMA received accreditation by submitting a very extensive application demonstrating the CCA program's compliance with the NCCA's *Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs*.

NCCA is the accrediting body of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (formerly the National Organization for Competency Assurance). The NCCA Standards were created in 1977 and updated in 2003 to ensure certification programs adhere to modern standards of practice for the certification industry.

NCCA Standards address the structure and governance of the certifying agency; characteristics of the certification program; information required to be available to applicants, certificants, and the public; and recertification initiatives of the certifying agency. To maintain NCCA accreditation, certification bodies such as AHIMA are required to consistently adhere to a set of requirements or procedures related to quality, openness and due process. To view the standards visit <http://www.credentialingexcellence.org/ncca>.

With this recognition, AHIMA joins an elite group of more than 100 organizations representing over 200 programs that have received and maintained NCCA accreditation.

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