

HIM-Interchange

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Letter from the Editor

Jennie Shephard



Dear *HIM-Interchange* readers

Welcome to Volume 6, Number 3, of *HIM-Interchange (HIM-I)*. Volume 6 means six years of your own dedicated professional practice journal. *HIM-I* has evolved from humble beginnings as an insert in the *Health Information Management Journal* to become your very own fully-fledged professional practice journal. This would not have been possible without the vision and hard work of the Editorial Board, the *HIM-I* Subcommittee and, of course, the contributions from Health Information Managers (HIMs) and Clinical Coders (CCs) from around Australia. A big thank you to you all!

Every time I read the final draft of a forthcoming issue before I write my letter I learn something about our profession, about how it works from the inside, and about the incredible diversity of work that HIMs and CCs undertake. This Issue is no different. The theme of *Career challenges for the health information management professional* has attracted some interesting articles that identify the complexities of health information management work and introduce us to some innovative solutions. Not least of these is our guest editorial from Kerin Robinson and Dianne Williamson, who have explained the complex frameworks and standards that underpin our health information management degree courses (Robinson and Williamson, 2016). It is no mean feat to understand all of this, let alone apply it to the development and maintenance of university courses. It is imperative, of course, that these standards are maintained in order to produce work-ready graduates. My big take-home message from this guest editorial relates to the important part the HIMAA *Health Information Manager (HIM) Entry-Level Competency Standards* play in supporting the universities to meet the demands of the health industry for competent health information management graduates. The other important point is that graduates then expand on these entry-level skills to obtain intermediate and advanced skills "in the workplace through experiential learning and professional development" (Robinson and Williamson, 2016: 5). This is one of the career challenges for graduates and for established professionals who must assist new graduates to learn these skills. HIMAA's membership of Professions Australia further supports the importance that HIMAA places on having competency standards articulated for our profession. Richard Lawrance has provided a brief background to our engagement with Professions Australia and it seems we are very well placed, because of our competency documents, to contribute to the work of

this organisation, as well as benefit from the engagement with other professional bodies (Lawrance, 2016).

Denise Meyerson (Meyerson, 2016) in her Personal Perspective, *Women in leadership: practical guidelines to get you where you want to go*, encourages us to meet our career challenges “head on” and to take charge of our destiny. There is no doubt that one of the big challenges for HIMs is that we are a predominantly female profession. Denise encourages us develop our networks and “build our brand” on our own terms, using our own skills rather than buying into the expectations set by others.

Sue Walker (Walker, 2016a), in her article about remote clinical coding placements, describes the challenge of finding adequate student placements, something we all understand. However, Queensland’s integrated electronic medical record solution has allowed students to undertake a rural or regional placement remotely. The many advantages outlined in business cases for the introduction of electronic medical records probably did not mention the advantage of creating remotely-managed placements for health information management students! Remote clinical coding is becoming a viable option in many health services but now clearly can also be applied in an educational capacity. *Who would have thought?* And this may be only the thin edge of the wedge. How many other opportunities might there be to support undergraduate and postgraduate students through remote delivery of real life experiences?

We have two articles relating to the health information management workforce for your perusal in this Issue. One is a summary of the various activities that have been undertaken to research the current state of the health information management workforce in Australia, presented by Kerryn Butler-Henderson and colleagues (Butler-Henderson et al., 2016). This article calls on us to work towards establishing a process that would give us reliable and regular workforce data to support strategic developments to sustain an ongoing professional health information management workforce. A report by Sue Walker (Walker, 2016b) on the work of the Global Health Workforce to, among other things, *establish global health information curricula and competency standards*, provides an interesting link between our own workforce challenges and the important role that competency standards play in producing a robust global health information management workforce.

When thinking about your career challenges do not overlook the value of your hospital librarian. Dianne Blackwood and Jeanette Bunting have provided a very useful insight into the role of this health information professional area (Blackwood and Bunting, 2016). The fact that Health Libraries Australia has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with HIMAA reinforces the notion that we are all in this together. In the hospital setting, health librarians “*play an active role in areas such as strategic planning, quality and safety, accreditation and general administration*” (Blackwood and Bunting: 14). Do these areas sound familiar?

Other articles in this Issue highlight the diverse roles HIMs may undertake and I am sure you will enjoy reading about clinical registries (Holland, 2016), the Pacific Health Network

(Bennett, 2016), and Laura Harris’ experience as a graduate HIM trainee (Harris, 2016), as well as our regular quality conversation feature from Cathy Balding, who discusses how difficult it is to get communication right (Balding, 2016).

Finally, but quite importantly, we have included the November 2015 World Health Organization (WHO) news-letter update about ICD-11. Yes, ICD-11 is coming! You can access the beta draft on the WHO webpage,¹ and follow progress in the development and pending release.² If you are a CC or a HIM working in clinical coding this is **going to impact** on you. The release is only a few short years away. Get involved now, the change will easier later.

One last important message: next year we are moving away from theme-based issues of *HIM-I*. Rather than having a theme, we will use the HIMAA competency domains as universal themes for each issue. This means you can submit an article on any aspect of health information management at any time!

Please enjoy this final Issue for 2016, and consider what you might be able to contribute to a 2017 issue. As always, do not hesitate if you need help to write. We are willing and able to help!

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Jennie Shephard
Editor

1 <http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd11/browse/f/en>
2 <http://www.who.int/classifications/en/>