



issues&trends

A KELLY HEALTHCARE RESOURCES® AND KELLY IT RESOURCES® REPORT



HEALTH INFORMATICS: THE DIGITAL AGE OF HEALTHCARE

Introduction

The Information Age has impacted nearly every facet of human life since well before the end of the 20th century as information technology has vastly improved the world's communication capabilities. During the past decade, the healthcare industry has anticipated a positive information technology transition of its own—digital healthcare records that will allow medical providers to have access to patients' medical histories and prescriptions nationwide. Today, information technologists are on the verge of creating a systematic approach to health informatics which will vastly improve the quality and efficiency of our nation's healthcare system. Through the application of information and communication technology within the healthcare industry,

hospitals and doctors' offices around the country will now be able to store, share, and analyze data that can save thousands of lives each year.

Currently, a patent is pending for a Medical Informatics Public Utility which will safely store all Americans' medical records. President Barack Obama is anticipating spending \$20.6 billion¹ over the next five years for an investment in health informatics in order to lower the cost of our nation's healthcare. By 2011, all healthcare providers must have a qualifying health informatics system in order to be eligible for the maximum incentive payments available through the federal economic stimulus package, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

¹As of July 2009



If healthcare providers fail to have a qualifying health informatics system by 2015, providers will incur financial penalties. For example, according to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, physicians who are not using health informatics will lose 1 percent of their Medicare fees in 2015 and 3 percent of their fees by 2017. Hospitals will also receive penalties through Medicare payment cuts if a qualifying electronic health record system is not in place by 2015.

In March 2009, Dr. David Blumenthal, a professor of medicine and healthcare policy at Harvard Medical School, was named the national coordinator for health information technology. Blumenthal will lead the execution of the future plan for health informatics as detailed in the ARRA, which will invest \$20.6 billion in health information technology to advance the efficiency of the nation's healthcare system in order to improve patients' quality of care. Blumenthal is hoping to modernize the nation's healthcare system by 2014 in order to reduce health costs for the federal government and save \$12 billion during the next decade.

Up until now, a major hurdle for healthcare facilities has been the funding required to transition to digital healthcare. Through this investment, all healthcare facilities around the country will have the funding needed to transition to digital healthcare records. However, there lies another daunting hurdle: each facility will also need the support and expertise of the most skilled information technologists and healthcare professionals in the field. As the nation's healthcare system is expected to be completely modernized in the next five years, the question remains: will organizations have the healthcare informatics specialists needed during these demanding times?

In order to maintain the quality of care that patients receive, highly qualified healthcare professionals of various levels—ranging from licensed RNs with IT experience to health informatics specialists—will be needed. In the years ahead, Kelly Services®, will provide healthcare informatics specialists to companies nationwide through their healthcare and IT specialty services.

Kelly will continue to connect companies around the world with information technology professionals, especially in the health informatics field. In order to successfully improve health information technology and change the quality of care for patients, highly qualified healthcare and information technology

professionals must work together. As the future of health informatics appears bright, Kelly Services will continue to staff highly qualified professionals in both healthcare and information technology fields for years to come.

Transformation of the Health Industry

Currently, most of the health industry's data is generated in a paper environment, leading to disorganization, limited communication, and restricted support for healthcare professionals around the nation. Information technology will be able to transform the way the health industry manages its data so that healthcare professionals can more efficiently communicate with each other. With digital healthcare records, miscommunication concerning patient diagnosis or medication will be greatly reduced. Not only will health informatics save health professionals time and money during the next decade, but the well-being and general outlooks of patients will improve. The primary goal of all healthcare professionals is to save and improve peoples' lives. Through health informatics, healthcare professionals will now be able to focus more productively on the care of their patients with less emphasis on maintaining their patients' medical records.

In addition to transforming the health industry's paper environment, health informatics will also provide employment to an increasing range of healthcare professionals. Not only will information technology and health information management professionals be able to improve our nation's healthcare system, but nurses, project managers, trainers, and allied clinicians will also have an impact on the health informatics industry. While the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has projected that more than 6,000 new healthcare professionals will be needed each year during the next five years, only 2,600 college graduates have entered the field this past year. With a shortage of individuals entering the profession with an advanced degree, now is the time for people to gain certification so they can begin to influence the growing industry. As the data management of the nation's health industry will drastically improve over the next five years, there will be opportunities for all levels of healthcare professionals to have a positive impact on the transformation of health information technology.



An Industry of Growth

Before the \$20.6 billion investment towards health informatics was announced, less than 2 percent of the nation's hospitals had developed a health informatics system. However, there is now little doubt that health informatics is a growing field that IT and healthcare professionals should consider. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the employment of health information management professionals is projected to grow by about 18 percent over the next few years as 10 of the 20 fastest growing occupations in the country are concentrated in healthcare services.

In 2007, the *U.S. News and World Report's* Best Careers List included health informatics as a new career field that promises numerous opportunities for professionals to not only obtain positions, but develop long-lasting careers as well. As healthcare facilities around the country implement health informatics over the next five years, IT and healthcare professionals of various career levels and experiences will have the opportunity to find their niche. Recent college graduates with degrees in health informatics and well-experienced health professionals who are hoping to make a career transition to a new, viable field will find various opportunities in health informatics. With such a hopeful future amidst today's economy, health informatics is a promising field for IT and healthcare professionals.

With such anticipated growth, health informatics is a field that should be considered by healthcare and IT professionals who are interested in pursuing a career shift. "All individuals in the healthcare and IT industries who are looking for new challenges may want to consider work in health informatics," said Tammy Browning, vice president of Kelly IT. "Health informatics promises to be one of the fastest growing industries in healthcare over the next decade. Not only will health informatics create more jobs in the nation, but the field will also revolutionize the maintenance of health records for years to come."

Which Types of Professionals Are Typically Employed in Health Informatics?

The field of health informatics will demand the skills of numerous types of professionals, including librarians, trainers, clinicians, and experienced IT and health information managers. Hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, and public health organizations will all need to implement health informatics within their organizations. In addition, consulting firms and governmental agencies will also

be seeking IT professionals during the next five years. Finally, the need for health informatics professors will also significantly increase during the next decade, as more and more students become interested in the field. The possibilities in health informatics are endless. With the help of workforce solutions providers, such as Kelly Services, individuals will be able to experience the assortment of opportunities in health informatics for themselves.

Pursuit of HIPAA Compliance

In 1996 the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) was created to develop national standards for electronic healthcare transactions in order to increase the privacy and security of health record information. As the healthcare industry begins to leverage more healthcare informatics technology, Kelly Services is aware of the growing need to ensure HIPAA compliance. Kelly Services has the capabilities and is consciously pursuing HIPAA compliance for relevant service offerings. As part of the HIPAA service agreement, various health plans and healthcare providers, known as covered entities, must comply with HIPAA regulations so that Americans' comprehensive medical record information will be protected. As health informatics dramatically improves the organization of the nation's healthcare records, HIPAA compliance will ensure that Americans' healthcare information is private and secure.

Kelly Is Here to Help

Will your company be prepared for the arrival of health informatics? Kelly Services offers healthcare and information technology professionals who have been well-trained in their prospective fields. You can rest assured that informatics professionals understand the latest technology so that your company's transition to digital healthcare records will be as smooth as possible. A major goal of Kelly Healthcare Resources is to help companies begin the transition to health informatics as soon as possible so our nation's healthcare system will continue to improve and more lives will be saved.

"The momentum, from government and industry, behind the health informatics initiatives will continue to grow," said Connie J. Gray, vice president of Kelly Healthcare. "Kelly Services is uniquely positioned as a single source provider of people with the knowledge and experience across a wide array of skill sets necessary for the success of health informatics."



Conclusion

As health informatics improves the quality and efficiency of our nation's healthcare system during the next five years, Kelly Services will provide companies with the healthcare and information technology professionals that will be needed during the transition from paper health records to digital health records. As the health informatics industry continues to grow during the next decade, health record professionals will be in higher demand than at any other time in history. Individuals from all types of healthcare and information technology backgrounds will be able to apply their skills and experiences to a crucial industry that will impact the well-being of millions of patients.

In order to ensure companies are prepared for the arrival of health informatics, Kelly Healthcare and Kelly IT will supply companies with well-trained and experienced healthcare and informatics professionals. Finally, in order to ensure the privacy of clients' medical information, Kelly Services is consciously pursuing HIPAA compliance for relative service offerings. Health informatics will not only positively impact the efficiency of healthcare information for years to come, but will also produce thousands of new jobs for Americans around the country. As the era of health informatics begins, be assured that your organization is prepared through the workforce solutions of Kelly Services.

Kelly Healthcare has experienced and knowledgeable recruiters who find talent in a number of clinical healthcare disciplines nationwide, ranging from RNs to chief nursing information officers, to complement the business needs and practices of hospitals, clinics, and direct patient care facilities throughout the healthcare sector, as well as industrial settings. For more information about Kelly Healthcare Resources, visit www.kellyhealthcare.com.

Kelly IT places nearly 8,000 professionals in contract, contract-to-hire, and full-time employment positions across all IT disciplines each year by matching the staffing needs of technical organizations with highly qualified information technology professionals. For more information about Kelly IT, visit www.kellyit.com.

Resources

<http://www.engineeringchallenges.org/cms/8996/8938.aspx>

<http://medicalinformaticspublicutility.com>

<http://www.nejm.org>

<http://www.himss.org>

<http://www.harvardscience.harvard.edu/medicine-health/articles/blumenthal-named-national-coordinator-health-information-technology>

<http://www.rwjf.org/pr/product.jsp?id=40288>

<http://www.healthcare-informatics.com>

<http://www.usnews.com/articles/business/best-careers/2007/12/19/ahead-of-the-curve-careers.html>

<http://www.hhs.gov>