



HEAL Coalition ALERT: AHIMA Study Demonstrates Coders' Importance for ICD-10 Implementation

A recent study by the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) illustrates both the value which quality medical coders provide to the health profession and the importance of allowing time for an adequate transition to the ICD-10 billing protocol.

More than half of all medical offices surveyed for the study (53%) reported coding positions that had gone unfilled for at least four months; nearly one-quarter (23%) had coding positions open for at least seven months. But the AHIMA study also found that those coders hired received competitive salaries – more than four-fifths (82%) of coders with at least three years' experience made at least \$30,000.

“The AHIMA survey results confirm what our member institutions have told us: Medical Coding and Billing is a worthwhile profession – but at a time when qualified coders are in short supply, schools will need adequate time to train enough personnel to adapt to the new ICD-10 billing protocol,” HEAL Coalition Executive Director Tom Netting stated, noting that the new standards include a nearly tenfold increase in the number of billing codes, to more than 200,000.

The HEAL Coalition has been working with key policy-makers in the Administration regarding the proposed rule for ICD-10 implementation, to inform them of the challenges which institutions offering Medical Coding and Billing programs face as they train students in the new billing format.

Netting commented: “Health policy-makers have appreciated our input, and showed receptivity to HEAL’s concerns on ICD-10. As the proposed rule on ICD-10 moves through the regulatory process, we will continue to work with all interested parties in a constructive fashion as we represent our member institutions on this important issue.”

To read the journal article summarizing the AHIMA study, visit http://www.ahima.org/emerging_issues/CodersWanted.pdf

If you are interested in joining us, would like more information regarding the HEAL Coalition, or wish to learn more about the ICD-10 issue, contact Executive Director Tom Netting at (202) 626-8553.