Bridging the Skills Gap

Empowering Clinical Coders

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Background

- Department of Health (Victoria) funded Southern Health & Clinical Coding Services Pty Ltd to deliver Pilot Clinical Coding Training Program (CCTP)

- CCTP part of Alumni Strategy Feb 2012 - Health Information Workforce.

- Course – Clinical Coders (CC) not currently working 10 places
Alumni Strategy Findings

• Ongoing shortage of Health Information Management Workforce (HIW) in Victoria

• In 2009 Vacancy rates of HIM & CC 25% & 22% Rurals, 15% & 10% Metros respectively

• AIHW Estimated over next 5 years Victoria will require 71 to 406 new positions.

• Solution = practical experience, skills & knowledge to work at an entry level for CC
Alumni Strategy Recommendations

• Identified knowledge gaps of:
  • Casemix funding (or ABF), Vic WIES model, AR-DRGs
  • Vic coding prefixes
  • Vic Hospital Admission Policy
  • Abstracting from medical records
  • Link between coding & health budget
  • Approaches to dealing with missing, unclear or confusing clinical info
  • Importance of auditing in the coding environment
CCTP Pilot Evaluation Criteria

- Delivery Mode – Valuable
- New Skill Acquisition – Abstracting & Practical Coding experience
- Participants work ready
CCTP - Design

- Build on prior learning – coding qualification
- 10 week – 8 hour sessions
- Practical coding experience using Scanned Medical Record (SMR)
- Individual feedback & support
- Speciality tutorials on coding related topics
- Advertised in DoH Bulletin
- 20 Enquiries: 4 withdrew – 16 assessed
CCTP – Selection Process

- Information session
- Skills testing –
  - Spelling
  - Filing & logic
  - Computer navigation
  - Group interview (problem solving)
  - Coding
CCTP – Selection Results

- Coding Test Results before course:
  - Range 7 – 19, average 15 (29%)
  - Total score - 51
- Applicants Ranked based on:
  - Codes correct
  - Abstracting skill
  - Logic with code tree
  - Number of questions attempted
Pre Testing

- Filing & logic test showed a correlation with Coding test performance
- Spelling test & group interview showed no correlation
- Typing test showed no correlation but identified people with minimal computer skills
Evaluation

• Pre, mid & post Survey Monkey questionnaires
  ◦ Ranking of skills expected & achieved – major items
  ◦ Focus on gaps in prior education
  ◦ Midpoint allowed delivery model & content to be fine tuned
  ◦ Measured coding employment participation rates
  ◦ Monitored new skills acquired
• Progressive Coding assessments
• Coding test again at conclusion of course
What Students Wanted

- Practical coding experience of medical records
- Knowing what additional reference material is available
- Knowing how to access reference material
- Coding skills revision
- Understanding how a medical record is structured
- How to use all of the material for abstracting
- How to interpret, understand and use clinical documentation & abbreviations
What Students Wanted

- Abstracting skills
- Understanding how DRGs are structured
- How DRGs fund Hospitals
- How abstraction & code application impacts the DRG
- How to use ebooks
- How to use Codefinder
- Gain a coding position
Pre: What do you wish to achieve?

- 15 choices available
- Asked to select number one priority

- Practical coding experience - 70%
- Coding skills revision - 10%
- How to use Codefinder - 10%
- To secure a coding position - 10%
Mid Point – Skills Acquired to Date

- Number one priority

- Practical coding experience - 57%
- Coding skills revision - 15%
- Understanding how a medical record is structured - 14%
- Abstracting skills - 14%

- Second last priority – Securing a coding position!
End Point – What did you achieve?

- Asked to select number one priority

40% Practical coding experience
60% Abstracting skills
New Learnings Not Provided in Prior Education

- Disease processes, standard investigations for conditions, treatment protocols
- Basic anatomy, physiology
- Abstracting from a medical record
- Application of coding standards
- Continued professional development
- Reinforced Coding Conventions
- Interview skills
- Other
Final Coding Test Results

• Range 16 – 34
• Average Result – 25 (43%)
• Average improvement by 53% from pre test
• Attempted different questions
• Time constraints still big challenge for students – 45 minutes
• No students completed the entire test
Coding Employment Rates

Have you obtained employment during/ since completing this course?

- Yes: 30%
- No: 70%

- Have not looked for a coding position: 20%
- Currently no coding jobs I am interested in: 20%
- Prefer to continue in my current position: 60%
CCTP Pilot Evaluation

✓ Delivery mode (positive comments)
✓ Acquisition new skills (abstraction & practical coding)
✓ Participants work ready (5 looking for work & 3 successful)
Learnings

• 5 participants – misconceived coding role & not currently seeking work as a coder
• Feedback – these participants thought they could code 1-2 days a week & compliment existing job
Empowering Clinical Coders

- All students completed the course
- Armed with new skill set
- Results of coding test validates the practical coding experience is beneficial
- Supported to apply for clinical coding positions
- Agencies continue to provide support
Did We Achieve Our Aim of Bridging the Gap?

RESULTS

• Learnings
  ◦ Abstracting from Medical Record
  ◦ Coding Conventions
  ◦ Practical application of Coding Standards

• Employment

• Experience of ‘life as a coder’
Thoughts for the Future

• Was ten days training enough to make a difference?

• Was it too fast 1 day a week?

• Education Partnerships i.e. universities/training organisations & employers
Thoughts for the Future

- Should we have asked the question “are you prepared to give up your job to become a coder?”
- Would the students have known the answer?
- Would we have gotten an honest answer?
- Should participants be in a coding role when undertaking the course i.e. apprenticeship/trainee model
- Participants loose skills if not in a role soon after
Food for Thought

Did we select the right students?

How can we refine the selection process?