



Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services

Agency Health Professional Reference Group

Allied Health Professional Workforce Planning Group

Allied Health Professional Workforce Planning Project

Health Information Management Information

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2 Preface

This Health Information Management Information should be read in conjunction with the main Allied Health Professional Workforce Planning Project Discussion Paper.

3 Overview

Health information managers plan, develop, implement, evaluate and manage health records in health care facilities.

The DHHS health information managers are employed under the Administrative and Clerical Stream of the Community and Health Services (Public Sector) Award. As the workforce project analysed information on allied health professionals employed under the Professional Stream, there was no Human Resource Services Information System data available to the project, on the DHHS health information management workforce.

Health information management is a three or three and a half year undergraduate degree course offered in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia.

Representatives of the Tasmanian branch of the Health Information Management Association of Australia stated that it was difficult to recruit health information managers in Tasmania, particularly as the profession is classified under the Administrative and Clerical Stream of the current award.

Tasmanian representatives of the professional organisation also stated that retention of health information managers was a problem in Tasmania due to higher salaries interstate and to a lack of consultation on issues which impact on work practices for health information managers.

Despite these recruitment and retention factors, representatives from the professional organisation stated that Tasmania can be an attractive place of employment for health information managers as there are opportunities to obtain a variety of work experiences and to be employed in positions with high levels of responsibility. These opportunities should be emphasised in recruitment.

4 Description of the health information management profession

Health information managers plan, develop, implement, evaluate and manage health records in health care facilities. They combine knowledge of health care processes, health records and administration, information management and human resource management to provide services that meet the medical, legal, ethical and administrative requirements of the health care system.

Health information managers usually work in hospitals or other health facilities where they liaise with medical, nursing, other health professionals and administrative staff. They may have some contact with the public. Some positions have a substantial managerial responsibility (Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training 2002).

Health information management graduates can also be employed in the areas of departmental and service management, database management, casemix, quality improvement, project management or as research assistants, health information consultants or primary care practice managers (University of Sydney 2002).

4.1 Description of related occupations

4.1.1 Archivist

Archivists analyse and document records and plan and organise systems and procedures for the safekeeping of records and historically valuable documents.

4.1.2 Clinical coder

Clinical coders translate descriptions of medical diagnoses and procedures into codes that record health care data. Health information managers also undertake coding.

4.1.3 Health services - hospital administrator

Health services - hospital administrators plan, direct and co-ordinate health and administrative services provided by hospitals, community health services and other health service organisations.

4.1.4 Records manager

Records managers are responsible for the creation, storage, retrieval and disposal of all recorded information about an organisation's activities. This information contributes to what is often called the 'corporate memory' of the organisation, without which an organisation could not function properly or be held accountable for its actions.

(Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training 2002)

5 Workforce supply

5.1 Profile of the current health information management workforce

5.1.1 Demographics of the health information management workforce

5.1.1.1 Human Resources Information System data

The DHHS health information managers are employed under the Administrative and Clerical Stream of the Community and Health Services (Public Sector) Award. As the project analysed information on allied health professionals employed under the Professional Stream, there was no Human Resources Information System data available on the DHHS health information management workforce.

5.1.1.2 DHHS staff survey data

The DHHS staff survey was distributed through the local professional organisation and five completed forms were received from health information managers.

5.1.2 Types of work

Of the five respondents to the DHHS staff survey, four indicated that they worked in health information management at the Royal Hobart Hospital and one was employed as a project officer in the Telehealth Tasmania Network.

5.1.3 The education of health information managers

Health information management is a three or three and a half year undergraduate degree offered in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia (Health Information Management Association of Australia 2002).

The Western Australia Curtin University of Technology offers the only health information management undergraduate degree by distance education in Australia (Curtin University of Technology 2002).

The University of Sydney, New South Wales offers the only post-graduate course in health information management in Australia (University of Sydney 2002).

Representatives of the Tasmanian branch of the Health Information Management Association of Australia indicated that an undergraduate course through the University of Tasmania was not an option as there are insufficient local positions available to support potential graduates.

Two of the health information managers who responded to the DHHS staff survey had post-graduate qualifications and one of these respondents was currently undertaking another post-graduate course.

5.2 Projecting workforce supply

Workforce supply is a balance between outgoing staff (retirees, those temporarily withdrawing from the workforce, emigrants or those who die or take up employment with other employers) and incoming staff (new graduates, immigrants, staff coming from other employment and staff increasing their hours of employment).

5.2.1 Outgoing staff

No health information managers terminated their employment with the DHHS in 2000 and 2001.

In order to ascertain the possible future numbers of outgoing health information managers, staff were asked a number of questions in the DHHS staff survey. Staff were asked:

- if the hours they worked were the hours they wanted to work
- if they anticipated a change in their work hours in the next three years and the reasons for this change
- if they were considering leaving the DHHS in the next six to twelve months, and if so, what were the reasons
- what their levels of satisfaction were for a number of professional practice parameters.

Two health information managers indicated that they were not happy with their hours of work. Both of these respondents indicated that they were working between 7 to 12 hours of unpaid overtime per week that they would prefer not to have to work.

Four (80 per cent) of the respondents indicated that they expected their hours of work to increase by between 10 and 20 per cent in the next three years. The reasons given for the expected increase in hours were 'workplace changes' and 'developments in medical technology'.

Two health information managers indicated that they were considering leaving the DHHS for other employment in the next six to twelve months.

Information on staff levels of satisfaction with the various professional practice parameters are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Satisfaction with professional practice parameters in DHHS

Criteria measured	Per cent of respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied
Opportunity to use your abilities	60%
Sufficient work to maintain competence	100%
Hours of work	40%
Amount of work	60%
Overall satisfaction	60%

Source: DHHS staff survey October 2001

Representatives of the Tasmanian branch of the Health Information Management Association of Australia stated that retention of health information managers was a problem in Tasmania due to higher salaries interstate and to a lack of consultation on issues which impact on work practices for health information managers. In addition, there was no infrastructure in place to support and retain health information managers.

5.2.2 Incoming staff

Tasmanian representatives of the Health Information Management Association of Australia indicated that it was difficult to recruit health information managers in Tasmania, particularly as the profession is classified under the Administrative and Clerical Stream of the current award.

There were no health information management positions advertised by the DHHS in 2000 and 2001.

6 Workforce demand

6.1 Current demand for health information managers

6.1.1 Perceived health information management service gaps

Tasmanian representatives of the Health Information Management Association of Australia expressed concern about the limited number of people available in Tasmania to undertake coding audits that are a national requirement. These audits can be undertaken by health information managers or coders.

6.1.2 Patterns of usage

6.1.2.1 Staff workload assessments

The DHHS staff survey asked health information managers if they considered their current workload was about right, too much or too little. Of the five health information management respondents:

- two (40 per cent) stated that their workload was about right
- three (60 per cent) stated that their workload was too much.

6.2 Projecting future demand for health information managers

No information was obtained about the national drivers for the health information management workforce, although the five respondents to the DHHS staff survey gave their perceptions.

6.2.1 Perceived drivers of health information management services in Tasmania

The majority of health information management respondents to the DHHS staff survey perceived that the factors likely to increase the future size of the health information management workforce were:

- aging of the population
- requirements for safer procedural practice
- need for improved geographical distribution of the profession

- increasing specialisation
- cost containment strategies
- reforms to increase efficiency
- growth in consumer demand

7 Workforce planning issues identified through consultations

7.1 Classification of health information managers

Presently DHHS staff in health information management positions are employed under the Administration and Clerical Stream of the Community and Health (Public Sector) Award. This classification does not acknowledge the staff members' tertiary qualification or assist in attracting and retaining qualified staff.

The important role of health information managers is being increasingly recognised by DHHS.

7.2 Staff satisfaction with DHHS employment

Information about staff satisfaction with employment with the DHHS was sought through the focus groups. However, no health information managers attended the focus groups.

Representatives from the Tasmanian branch of the Health Information Management Association of Australia stated that Tasmania was an attractive place of employment for health information managers as there were opportunities to obtain a variety of work experiences and to be employed in positions with high levels of responsibility. These opportunities should be emphasised in recruitment.

7.3 Professional development to retain and strengthen a quality workforce

Tasmanian representatives of the Health Information Management Association of Australia raised concern regarding the limited access to professional development within Tasmania for health information managers.

The DHHS staff survey asked if regular CPD was offered through their employment. Eighty per cent of the respondents stated that regular CPD was not offered.

Four of the five health information management respondents to the DHHS staff survey, who had applied for funding to attend a conference in the last two years, had received 100 per cent assistance to attend.

8 References

Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, Good job guide, viewed 10 July 2002,
<<http://jobguide.thegoodguides.com.au/search.cfm>>.

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<http://www.curtin.edu.au/curtin/dept/health/html/careers_detail_health_in_fo.htm>.

Health Information Management Association of Australia, viewed 10 July 2002,
<<http://www.himaa.org.au/him.html>>.

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