

WORKFORCE DEMANDS, EMPLOYERS AND EMERGING

HEALTH INFORMATICS PROFESSIONALS

Of the 482 unique job titles that HIC2012 delegates listed as their occupation, 19 of them had the term informatics in them. Amongst them were academic titles, clinical roles and some managerial titles such as Director of Health Informatics, Director of Nursing Informatics and Manager Health Informatics. Is this good enough in raising the profile of our profession?

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Considering the audience at HIC, out of the 900 or so people who attended, should we expect more than 22 of them to have the term 'informatics' in their title? Does it matter? In the final panel session of the conference, we asked panellists about the role of health informatics and its professionals.

It was the final session of an exciting but tiring four days. I started by asking delegates if they would describe themselves as a health informatics professional: how many have informatics somewhere in their job description and how many of them work for organisations that employ someone who practices informatics? There was a strong raising of hands in response to all of these questions, giving encouragement that we are making progress in raising the profile of health informatics and its professionals.

An insatiable demand

While progress may be occurring, it is not happening fast enough. The need for a health informatics-literate workforce and the need for health informatics professionals across the health sector will be an insatiable workforce demand for many years to come.

The opportunities for you as part of the health workforce are great. The demand

will come from the many burgeoning issues that are influencing the way healthcare is delivered, where it is delivered, and how the information is created, stored, managed, accessed and used – all of which affects the demand for health informatics.

These influencers include analytics and big data; genomics; data, devices and sensors; telehealth; workforce mobility and technologies that enable the mobility of data; clinical terminology, implementation and use; decision support and artificial intelligence; consumer informatics; and the changing nature of care delivery models.

Employers' needs

Employers who are looking for and need health informatics professionals include health providers, technology companies, research and education organisations and government. During HIC I heard from many employers across these sectors of our industry who voiced their frustration at not being able to find the people they need.

Many of them have work-arounds and techniques they have developed to train from within. Others said they recruit people with a health background as it is easier to teach informatics to people with a health background than to try and teach

About the author

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health to people with IT or technical backgrounds. Others have had success hiring for attitude and aptitude and teaching them healthcare.

Emerging health informatics professionals and students

During the networking reception at HIC we had a very good, albeit informal, gathering of health informatics students and emerging professionals. This group of people is interested in learning, finding a job, learning (purposefully repeated for emphasis) and establishing relationships with others who can give them sage advice about the next steps in their career. They wanted advice on how they can frame their long-term career strategy to have a long and successful career in this industry.

HISA has a mentorship program on the 'to do' list and thanks to input from these emerging professionals and a few experienced people who have put their hands up, this new offering is in train. Over the next few months we will be formulating how this program will work. If you would like to be involved – either as an emerging health informatics professional or as someone 'older and wiser' who is interested in nurturing the future of our profession – please let me know.

How can HISA help you?

Professor Enrico Coiera expressed in 140 characters or less this question to the twitterverse: "Is health informatics a body of

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@enricocoiera

knowledge or a body of people that get special things done that no one else can do?" Prof Coiera's question reverberated with me and other tweeps, as for most of us it is both. The health informatics community knows this, but there is still a way to go in achieving recognition of the uniqueness and specialness of what we do across the healthcare system.

As Australia's health informatics organisation, it is HISA's job to provide programs and opportunities to advocate for and support our community – you! You may not identify as a health informatician, but if you are reading *Pulse+IT*, then this applies to you. I invite you to contact me with your ideas and suggestions on how we can help you and others in the community. We have some things in the pipeline, but I'd love to incorporate your contributions to our strategy.

I look forward to turning your suggestions into reality!