Career Conversation with 2011 CIM Alumna
Jennifer Kehl, CTR

By Kim Graff

This summer (2013) I received my CIM certificate from SBCC after completing my practicum at the University of California San Francisco Medical Center Cancer Registry. It was a fast and furious five weeks of full time work and I would not have made it through successfully without the help of Jennifer Kehl CTR, a UCSF Abstractor and SBCC CIM alumna. Making the leap from abstracting in class to real life case is incredibly challenging and initially I felt overwhelmed and under prepared, despite having done well in the CIM program. As a relatively recent grad, and having gained perspective through her work experience at UCSF, Jen was able to relate to my struggles as a student and new (almost) CTR. She calmed me down when I wondered if I had chosen the right field, provided boundless encouragement and clear direction, and offered valuable insight into the often times perplexing situations that can arise when abstracting cancer cases; and perhaps most importantly, she answered my questions and considered my opinions as a peer. Who better to introduce and interview, and to offer as a stellar example for SBCC CIM students. Thank you Jen for your continuing support and guidance, and hopefully I will have an opportunity to pay it forward.

Kim Graff: How did you end up in CIM?
Jennifer Kehl: I worked as a 911 dispatcher years earlier and absolutely loved the feeling of doing something that made a difference in people’s lives but I ended up having to give it up because I had a young family and the hours were just horrible. For the next few years I looked unsuccessfully for another career that would allow me that feeling again but would also give me regular work hours (and one where I didn’t have to see icky things – I’m quite squeamish). I had finally decided I should get an HIT certificate with the idea that working in a hospital would better allow me to get a feel for what career opportunities there are in healthcare. This soon led me to finding out about the HIT sister program CIM at SBCC. Working with cancer information intrigued me because I had recently lost my father, who was only 61 years old, to a rare and aggressive sarcoma. When we found out he had cancer I became one of those people who do all the “research” into what it was, how it was treated, prognosis, etc. Even though it was a difficult time for our family I found everything about cancer to be fascinating and I devoured articles from medical and professional journals (Continued on page 3)

Inside this issue:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CTR Shortage</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHIMA’s New Website</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIT Pro-CP is now CHTS-CP</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apps for Health IT Students</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTR Exam Updates</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links &amp; Resources</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Couple of Notices from Gwyer Schuyler, Academic Counselor

♦ Reminder about ICD-10 and Certification Exams

While the date of implementation of the ICD-10 classification system is still set for October 2014, please be aware that the RHIT, CCA, and CCS exams will begin covering ICD-10 in April 2014!

♦ The Medical Coding Specialist Certificate and CCA/CCS Credentials

The Medical Coding Specialist Certificate is designed to prepare students for the Certified Coding Associate (CCA) Credential exam, which is an entry-level coding exam. It is not designed to prepare students for the Certified Coding Specialist (CCS) Credential exam. Even though our program meets the eligibility requirement for the CCS exam, gaining some on-the-job coding experience is recommended before taking the CCS exam.
Research from the National Cancer Registrars Association’s (NCRA) 2012 Job Task Analysis (JTA) indicated that there will be a shortage in workers with the certified tumor registrar (CTR) credential. A generation of Baby Booming CTR’s is close to retirement age. Due to this dynamic, students in the health information technology (HIT) program should consider specializing in cancer registry.

In a nutshell, cancer (or tumor) registrars maintain and track giant databases for regional and national facilities. Registrars review patient records and pathology reports in order to find reportable cancer cases (case finding) and summarize and assign codes for the diagnosis and treatment of different cancers and selected benign tumors (abstracting). Registrars also conduct annual follow-ups on all patients in the registry to track their treatment, survival, and recovery. Physicians and public health organizations then use this information to calculate survivor rates and success rates of various types of treatment; locate geographic areas with high incidences of certain cancers; and identify potential participants for clinical drug trials. Public health officials also use cancer registry data to target areas for the allocation of resources to provide intervention and screening.

For a glimpse into the roles and responsibilities of a cancer registrar, the NCRA’s Center for Cancer Registry Education has developed a series of videos that include presentations on:

- Cancer Registries
- Abstracting
- Coding
- Cancer Staging
- Case Finding
- Patient Follow-Up
- Data Submission
- Confidentiality and Release of Information
- Cancer Committee
- Tumor Boards
- Quality
- Becoming a CTR

Additional Resource:

“Double majoring in both HIT and CIM is a real asset in the job market…and having both your RHIT credential and your CTR credential could be the factor that makes you stand out from other job applicants. Possessing both credentials will broaden job possibilities.”

Gayer Schuyler, P&D

References
nals. Once I found out about the CTR profession and realized I could be helping in the fight against cancer by doing something that interested me I was all in.

K. Graff: Can you describe what you do at UCSF and how your job has evolved over the past 2 years?

J. Kehl: When I first started working for UCSF I pretty much just did casefinding based on our hospital’s discharge coding. I have slowly been given more and more cases to abstract and now the casefinding I do is a more minor part of my position and abstracting is the bulk of my work. Working in such a large Medical Center such as UCSF – we had ~6800 cases in 2011 - is a bit different from what most CTRs do in a smaller hospital setting with a one or two person department. We have 11 staff members in our registry, seven of whom are CTRs who abstract, and we also have a few outside contractors to do some abstracting for us as well. With such a large caseload each of our jobs are focused for the most part on a single task in the registry. The CTRs do abstracting as well as a bit of niche casefinding and other odds and ends around the office. We also have staff who are tasked with follow-up, casefinding, reports (our oncologists’ and researchers’ requests make this a full time job for one person), and other miscellaneous activities to keep the registry running. The clinics actually run their own tumor boards - each specialty (urology, thoracic, breast, hematology, etc..) has a tumor board every week. And our manager does all of the administrative activities that are too numerous to list.

K. Graff: Did you feel prepared for the job when you first started?

J. Kehl: Yes and no. I had done well in my classes and I approached the practicum thinking that I had acquired quite a bit of knowledge and skill throughout my courses. Then I went into a cancer registry for my practicum and felt like I knew almost nothing. But I got through the practicum and Ann Griffin, the manager of the UCSF registry, hired me. All along the way she had a tremendous amount of faith in me and I thought she was an insane optimist. But as I worked through the practicum and began working in the registry I realized that I really had acquired a great education from SBCC. I think the hard part was just getting used to being in an environment where things don’t always go smoothly and you have missing information and things aren’t as black and white as they were in the classes. I suppose I confused being overwhelmed with being ill-prepared. It doesn’t take long, though, to find your footing and suddenly everything is clicking and your flow improves. Pretty soon you’ll even find people who have been abstracting for years will ask you questions or seek your opinion.

K. Graff: What aspect of your job do you like best, least?

J. Kehl: Honestly, there are several things I love about my job so it’s difficult to pick just one. I enjoy learning new things pretty much every day. There are plenty of opportunities to attend regional, state, and national meetings, view webinars, or read articles in professional journals but there are also a lot of day to day learning experiences while you’re actively working.

Check Out AHIMA’s New Career & Student Center!

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) has redesigned their entire website as a one-step destination for both professionals and students. The new Career and Student Center (formerly HICareers.com) has new content that includes:

- Interactive charts and graphics with salary study and career path information
- Video profiles that feature students and health information professionals sharing personal stories and their reasons for choosing a career in the field
- Articles on financing your education, landing your first job, choosing a certificate or degree program, and the importance of accreditation and program recognition
- New section for Educators (recruiting tips, links to other AHIMA resources). Ability to search for schools and programs
- The latest industry news

http://www.ahima.org/careers
HIT Pro-CP is now CHTS-CP

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) now administers the Health IT competency exam for the Clinician/Practitioner Consultant. The grant that provided the funding for the Workforce Training Program at Santa Barbara City College (SBCC), as well as, the free exam vouchers ended on April 1, 2013. As a result, the HIT Pro-Clinician/Practitioner Consultant (HIT Pro-CP) exam converted to AHIMA’s new Certified Healthcare Technology Specialist Clinician/Practitioner (CHTS-CP) credential effective July 29, 2013. The exam will not change; however, “recertification will be mandatory for those who wish to keep and maintain the credential.” For more information visit http://www.ahima.org/certification/chts.aspx.

References

Apps for Health IT Students

Apps for your Android™ device

RHIT Exam Secrets by Mometrix Media LLC for $39.99

“RHIT Exam Secrets helps you ace the Registered Health Information Technician Exam without weeks and months of endless studying. Our comprehensive RHIT Exam Secrets study guide is written by our exam experts, who painstakingly researched every topic and concept that you need to know to ace your test.”

RHIT Health Information Tech 0.1 by Alfajirí Mobile Solutions for $2.89

“This RHIT app is designed with the health information technician student in mind. It covers all the topics in the RHIT exam. The app comes with over 1,000 flashcards and over 500 test questions. The flashcards are arranged in topics and they come with audio. You can choose to view both sides of the flash cards or view one side then flip as you study. The test questions are randomly generated from the massive test database. The tests are graded instantly and the answers are detailed and in depth.”

Tap into the App Store™ to find these apps by AHIMA

AHIMA Advantage is Free

“AHIMA Advantage is AHIMA’s bi-monthly member newsletter. Each issue delivers the latest news from the American Health Information Management Association by exploring key health information management practice issues and industry trends while providing information targeted toward HIM career advancement. AHIMA Advantage has been delivering the latest news to AHIMA members since 1996.”

AHIMA’s ICD-10-PCS Flash Cards for $7.99

“AHIMA’s ICD-10-PCS digital flashcard app demonstrates the power of technology to transform learning, energize coding communities, and inspire innovative learning and thinking. The first step in mastering ICD-10-PCS is to become familiar with the terminology, structure and format of this new code set. The new iTunes ICS-10-PCS digital flashcard app allows coding professionals to master ICD-10-PCS principles directly from an iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. The app covers 31 Medical and Surgical Root Operations, the 7 Approaches, and 16 digital cards illustrate the character values of each of the Sections of ICD-10-PCS.”

HIT/CIM Student Newsletter | Fall | 2013
At the risk of sounding a bit nutty, the thing I like least about my job is also something I love about my job. There are a lot of times when nothing in the record is clear. You can’t pinpoint the site. You don’t know if the patient is diagnosed at your facility or prior to coming here. Would it kill Dr. X to clinically stage a patient once in a while? How could the patient just disappear off the face of the earth between a radiology simulation appointment and the start of radiation treatment? And this is just your first abstract of the day! It can be very frustrating at times. But the detective work involved can also be fun. If we could do every abstract in cookie cutter fashion it would get boring pretty quickly. Luckily, that’s not a problem for us abstractors!

K. Graff: Looking back, which CIM classes were most relevant for you?
J. Kehl: Of course CIM 201 and 202 are essential and I don’t think I need to elaborate on their importance here. I would like to point out how critical CIM 125 Cancer Disease Management is to the program though. It was a bear of a class but it is so fundamentally important to abstracting. There are other resources you can and will use in abstracting but the disease management class gives you a solid foundation to know what to expect, what to look for, and a feeling for tests or treatment might be missing from the record so you need to go search for it. If you don’t have a basic idea as to how cancers are detected, worked up, and treated then you will be feeling around in the dark when you sit down to abstract a case. Worse, you will be more likely to overlook critical information in the record.

K. Graff: Is there anything you would recommend for a student preparing to start their practicum soon?
J. Kehl: The most difficult and time-consuming part of the practicum is abstracting. No surprise there. Pay attention to what Meryl Leventhal and Ann Griffin tell you in CIM 201/202 Abstracting Principles and Practice and keep every single note and comment they give you. The first day of my practicum I brought a binder containing all materials and comments Meryl had for the class and for me personally in CIM 201 and 202. I referred to them while doing my abstracts and I believe it was a major factor in why I did so well in the abstracting portion of my practicum. There are some things they are “picky” about and you won’t fully understand why that is until you’re a CTR sitting in a registry abstracting a case. Ann and Meryl will be giving you invaluable tips and critiques that you need to absorb and incorporate into your abstracts. It will make you a better registrar and it will make your life easier when you someone up the line at the regional or state registry is visually editing your work.

K. Graff: How about for someone new to the CIM program?
J. Kehl: Probably the most important tip I can give is to study smart in your classes. If you don’t know an answer in your courses first look for the answer in your resources. If you can’t find the answer in your resources ask the instructor for clarification. This is what you will be doing when working in a registry. Do not approach the material as something to be memorized well enough to pass the class because that is not the kind of skill that will help you when you’re in the real world of a cancer registry. When you’re working in a registry you need to be able to figure out for yourself where the answers are and how to use your resources but you also need to know when to stop spinning your wheels and ask for help or clarification.

K. Graff: Any tips on how to get through the practicum?
J. Kehl: While you are in your practicum this is your perfect opportunity to talk with other registrars and get an idea about what goes on in their heads. Pick their brains for gems about how they go about making decisions in a case, how they approach problems, etc. Registrars are resourceful people (we have to be!) and even someone who hasn’t been “in the business” for long has likely developed some great tricks and tips. Listen to what’s going on around the registry and you’ll find that registrars constantly talk with each other about cases and ask opinions of each other. Even if it’s a one registrar office you’ll probably notice that person talking with the oncologists or other staff in the hospital. If you pay close attention to what is going on around you then your practicum can be about so much more than just learning how to abstract or put a tumor board together. As my manager likes to say, “Be a sponge.”

“...study smart in your classes. If you don’t know an answer in your courses first look for the answer in your resources. If you can’t find the answer in your resources ask the instructor for clarification.”
Links and Resources

Santa Barbara City College
HIT/CIM Department
www.sbcc.edu/hit
ICD-10 Information
ICD-10 Webinar Archive, October 2012
https://www.box.com/s/kjl517al1wgy494w5k6g

SBCC HIT/CIM Student Pages
Facebook http://facebook.com/hcspc2011
LinkedIn http://la.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4408348

Advance for Health Information Professionals
Student & New Grad Center
http://health-information.advanceweb.com/Student-New-Grad-Center/default.aspx

Health 2.0 http://health2con.com

Landing That First Job
http://hicareers.com/Toolbox/landingfirstjob.aspx

American Association of Professional Coders (AAPC)
http://www.aapc.com/
Credentialing Information

American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA)
http://www.ahima.org
Credentialing Information
http://www.ahima.org/certification/

California Cancer Registrars Association (CCRA)
http://www.ccraregistrars.org/
Membership
http://www.ccraregistrars.org/membership.htm

California Health Information Association (CHIA)
http://californiahia.org
CHIA Student Scholarships
http://californiahia.org/chia-student-scholarships
CHIA Membership
http://californiahia.org/join

Healthcare Information & Management Systems Society (HIMMS)
http://www.himss.org
Credentialing Information
http://himss.org/asp/CertificationHome.asp

National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA)
http://www.ncra-usa.org
Credentialing Information
http://www.ctrexam.org/credential/index.htm

Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC)
http://healthit.hhs.gov/portal/server.pt/community/healthit_hhs_gov__home/1204

California Office of Health Information Integrity
http://www.ohii.ca.gov/calohi/Home.aspx
8th Annual National Health IT Week

From September 16-20, 2013, healthcare industry and policy stakeholders will convene for the Eighth Annual National Health IT (NHIT) Week, a collaborative forum for public and private healthcare constituents to discuss the value of health information technology (IT) for the U.S. healthcare system.

Download the Toolkit to learn about 10 ways you can celebrate NHIT Week. An easy way for students to participate is by changing your social media profile image. Click here to download the following image.

40th California Cancer Registrars Educational Conference

Wednesday November 6, 2013 - Friday November 8, 2013
8757 Rio San Diego Drive San Diego, California 92108
@ the San Diego Marriott Mission Valley