

Northwest Outlook

 **hfma**™ washington / alaska chapter
healthcare financial management association

January - February

 **2010** 

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Publication Objective

The NW Outlook is the official publication of the Washington/Alaska Chapter Healthcare Financial Management Association. Our objective is to provide members with information regarding Chapter and national activities, with current and useful news of both national and local significance to healthcare finance professionals and to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information.

President's Message

by Grant Baumgartner, President



Bending the Cost/ Quality Curve

As healthcare finance professionals, we are increasingly being called to help find ways to lower the cost curve of our organization. Sometimes, we may even be involved in

analyzing practice patterns or internal control mechanisms with the goal to increase quality. For some of our members, this isn't a new focus, for others it is. Either way, for most of us I suspect there is a new and different focus on integrating our cost savings approaches with clinical operations in a way that much more strongly correlates with quality efforts than ever before.

To be a truly valuable resource for our healthcare organizations, it is our job as healthcare financial professionals to support cost and quality efforts in a value-added manner. To be **the** indispensable resource for healthcare finance, it is our job as an HFMA Chapter to provide a forum to discuss and share ideas on strategies and tactics for assisting our organizations in lowering costs and increasing

quality in our care delivery models.

Our HFMA Chapter has historically provided periodic face-to-face forums to discuss and learn about healthcare financial management issues. Now, we have created the ability for our Chapter members to engage in dialogue on issues on a real-time basis, 24-7 if they wish! Our new Chapter web site, launched earlier this week, provides members with the ability to exchange

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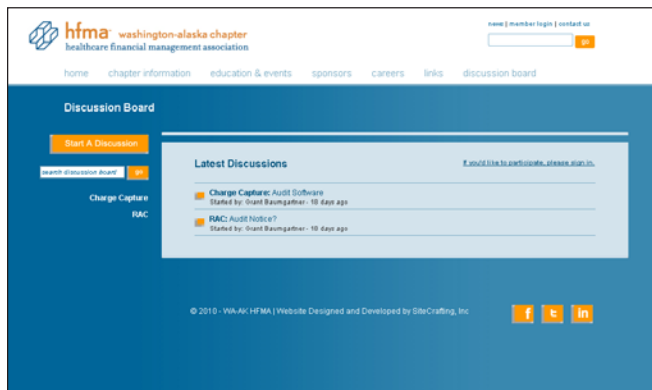
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THANK YOU!!!

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ideas and information on cost/quality issues, or on virtually any topic they wish, through members-only chat rooms. When someone in your organization asks you, "what are some



ideas to lower costs and increase quality?" You can check with other Chapter members on our website and potentially receive several points of view within minutes!

This new feature will help us to further our vision of being **the** indispensable resource for healthcare finance. It will be invaluable to you as you move forward working on new issues in the ever evolving healthcare industry. Please check out our new Chapter website at www.waakhfma.org and the "Discussion Board" tool that is now available for your use. We believe this tool is truly a way to lower your cost of obtaining valuable healthcare information, while raising the quality of your HFMA experience! ■



Business Leaders Can Learn From Past Presidents

by Shannon Affholter | Moss Adams LLP

As we observed Presidents Day on Feb. 15, we can learn a lot from past Presidents and the leadership skills they displayed while in office. Those who were most successful can attribute their triumphs to a few essential abilities, all of which can be used by any leader, whether in the Oval Office or a business executive office.

Individuals can have an enormous impact upon the success of a business. It is a unique and distinctive person who can lead others within a business to accomplish extraordinary feats. Effective leaders have both the natural talent and the desire to

develop leadership skills in themselves. By studying the words



and actions of history's greatest leaders, we can learn about a few of the leadership skills necessary for success in today's business environment.

Creating a vision for the future

Creating a confident vision for the future is an important ability for every business leader. A well crafted proclamation of what the future will hold provides the needed direction and optimism that people within an organization desire. Essentially, employees and associates want to know that their efforts are going toward something significant. When leaders provide a strong vision for their organization, they can define the purpose and expectations for everyone involved with the business and create a future that employees can have confidence in.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt created a hopeful

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vision for the future on March 4, 1933, when he delivered his first inaugural address. In the midst of the Great Depression — unemployment was high, poverty was widespread, and confidence in the economic future was low — Roosevelt described with conviction a promising future that people could truly envision and believe in. When he declared that “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself,” an aura of confidence resonated throughout the land.

Communicating a consistent message

The skill of communicating a consistent message over time is crucial to a business leader’s ability to keep employees focused on the company’s objectives. The message should be straightforward and easy to understand so that employees can clearly comprehend the desired result. Too often, business leaders will give conflicting messages to employees, causing confusion and a lack of cohesiveness in pursuing the organization’s goals. Communicating a consistent message keeps everyone on target. President Ronald Reagan’s consistent descriptions of the Soviet Union as an “evil empire” redefined foreign policy during the Cold War. When speaking at the Berlin Wall on June 12, 1987, Reagan ignored his advisors’ recommendations and challenged Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev by insisting, “Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” His message never wavered, ultimately strengthening his strategy to end the Cold War.

Persisting until the job is done

Another significant ability for business leaders to foster is the persistence to get the job done. Even when obstacles seem overwhelming, effective leaders continue to perform with boundless effort. They have the intensity and foresight to keep pressing on with confidence in their abilities. Their persistence also helps create a culture of excellence within the business that sets the example for their employees. With Civil War casualties topping 250,000 after the first two years, anti-war and anti-Lincoln sentiments grew, casting doubt on President

Abraham Lincoln’s re-election. However, Lincoln remained convinced that the conflict was necessary for the survival of the Union and for assuring freedom for all citizens. Lincoln’s persistence showed in his Gettysburg Address on Nov. 19, 1863, when he declared his commitment to win the war by stating, “It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us...that these dead shall not have died in vain...”

Inspiring others to take action

Business leaders must be able to inspire employees and motivate them to go beyond self-imposed limitations. They need to stir those in the company to rise above mediocrity and challenge them to pursue their unlimited potential. Without the inspiration from leadership, employees will not be fully motivated to achieve the higher expectations that have been placed upon the organization. With the Soviet Union moving ahead of us in space technology, President John F. Kennedy was eager for the United States to take the lead in the space race. Kennedy inspired the nation when he first announced the goal of landing a man on the Moon, at a joint session of Congress on May 25, 1961, saying, “I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind...” On July 21, 1969, the United States realized Kennedy’s lofty goal when Neil Armstrong set foot on the Moon.

Displaying a passion for people

Safeguarding the well-being of employees within the organization is a skill that business leaders have to demonstrate with genuine passion. They must be able to create a culture in which employees feel valued for their effort and are not afraid to make mistakes. Even with high performance expectations, employees will be more productive and more effective if they know that the company’s leadership truly cares for them personally and professionally. President Theodore Roosevelt is well remembered for his energetic personality and

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passionate affection towards others. Even when he was criticized as a radical by his own party, Roosevelt helped the well-being of people by passing new laws such as The Meat Inspection Act and The Pure Food and Drug Act. He articulated this care at the New York State Agricultural Association on Sept. 7, 1903, when he said, "the welfare of each of us is dependent fundamentally upon the welfare of all of us...We must see that each is given a square deal..."

Leading others by example

Finally, business leaders must have integrity and humility to effectively lead employees by example. They must demonstrate a dignified nature and avoid abusing their power so that all around them will follow in their honorable footsteps. Employees watch their leader's actions and listen to his or her words; therefore, the leader's example will have a tremendous effect on the business.

After the American Revolution, General George Washington rejected unlimited power on Dec. 23, 1783, by resigning his commission as commander-in-chief. Later, as President, Washington further displayed his humility and integrity when he refused to run for a third

presidential term, even though nothing stood in his way of becoming more powerful. In his farewell address published on September 19, 1796, he wrote, "...my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude, which I owe to my beloved country for the many honors it has conferred upon me..." Once again, Washington's words and actions served as the perfect example of strong, inspirational leadership.

Although your circumstances may be different in your business, you can use these examples to help develop your own leadership abilities. By learning from past Presidents and striving to emulate some of their most effective skills, you can both strengthen your business and help guide everyone in your company toward a promising future.

Shannon Affholter is a Business Development Executive with Moss Adams LLP who deals primarily with business and management planning. He can be reached at shannon.affholter@mossadams.com or at 425-259-7227.



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with the
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at the beautiful
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Alaska Healthcare Watch



This column is intended to share and inform the Chapter Members about Alaska healthcare financial news

by
Larry Barsukoff
Jennifer Brantley
Meg Flanagan
Cathy LeMay
Jennifer Mitchell
Southcentral Foundation



Fairbanks Ice Sculpture

HFMA's Credentialing Program for Revenue Cycle Professionals

By Meg Flanagan and Cathy LeMay

Are you looking for a way your staff can demonstrate revenue cycle proficiency? Do you want to encourage professional development among revenue cycle team members? Would you like to help staff working in various capacities within the revenue cycle develop their technical expertise? In my role as Patient Accounts Director in a relatively young and rapidly growing organization, I can answer "Yes!" to all of these questions. If any of these are also true for you, I recommend that you read on to learn more about HFMA's revenue cycle credentialing program.

HFMA launched the Credentialed Revenue Cycle Representative (CRCR) program in November 2008 in response to providers' unsolicited requests for a career development tool within the business office. Based on these requests, HFMA conducted research with provider organizations and chief financial executives to validate the

need for a credentialing tool. An Advisory Committee comprised of directors and vice presidents from twelve provider organizations was formed to determine the scope of the exam. The CRCR program was designed to help healthcare organizations advance the proficiency of staff across the entire revenue cycle and to validate a national level of achievement. In addition to traditional revenue cycle areas like patient access and patient accounts, the Advisory Committee confirmed that the CRCE could also be beneficial for case managers, RAC teams, HIM liaisons, and managed care staff.

Unlike other credentialing programs, e.g., coding or medical records, the CRCR is less task specific and intentionally broad in scope. The program covers seven topics: compliance, patient access, claims processing, account resolution, cash, financial management, and support departments. The learner is not expected to be a specialist in both front and back end processes but rather to have a global understanding of the entire revenue cycle. This approach is based on the belief that staff members can apply new knowledge to more effectively do their jobs and to communicate at a more professional level with colleagues and other professionals.

Because accessibility is so important to the success of the CRCR program, the entire program is online. This feature was critical to the decision to use this program in the Patient Accounts Management (PAM) Department at Southcentral Foundation (SCF) in Anchorage Alaska. The program features an online

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interactive self-study guide that helps participants prepare for a proctored, three hour exam. Participants proceed at their own pace and complete the study material within a timeframe that fits their work and personal schedules. The ability to customize study schedules was also a key factor for SCF since the PAM team is comprised of many working mothers and several individuals who are pursuing college degrees at least part time. It was very important to the success of this program at SCF that team members could develop a plan for completion that fit their busy lives.

Another unique feature of the CRCR program is its delivery through an organization rather than individual access to the exam. The organization licenses the program for an annual fee. There is no additional fee to sit for the exam and no fee to retest if an individual does not pass the first time. Under the organization's license, individual learners can review the materials in an unlimited manner. Because the exam selects questions from a pool of 250 questions, the retest is always fresh. Individuals who participate in the CRCR program do not need to be members of HFMA and there is no minimum level of education required.

The exam is timed with a maximum of three hours allowed for completion. Once completed, the test is scored in real time which gives the individual immediate feedback to know whether they passed and what their individual score was. A score of 75% required to pass the exam. Scores of less than 75% remain confidential. Individuals are at liberty to take the exam as many times as necessary to achieve a passing score. Individuals who pass the exam are awarded the CRCR designation from HFMA and they receive a certificate document and a lapel pin.

In the six months organizations have conducted testing, 20 professionals have achieved the CRCR designation in addition to the 41 professionals from the beta test. These professionals have on average 3 years of revenue cycle experience. It is interesting to note that there have been unsuccessful testers with over 20 years on the job which seems to confirm

that experience does not necessarily equal knowledge. To date, all testers have completed the exam within 2.5 hours.

Professional certification is required for promotion to the highest staff level position in the career ladder in SCF PAM. Currently the CRCR program is being used to support the career development and professional growth of the PAM team. The SCF PAM team is proud that one of our team members was among the first 20 to achieve the CRCR designation. The value of the immediate feedback on exam scoring was evident when a shout of "Yah Hoo!" was heard from the testing area! Recently a second member of our team also passed the examination and achieved CRCR designation. In the future, the program will be rolled out to other revenue cycle areas across the organization.

Many organizations view the CRCR program as a complement to their career ladder strategies. With this program, less tenured employees can now demonstrate level of knowledge across the entire revenue cycle. In some organizations, compensation and bonus programs are tied to professional credentialing as a means of differentiating pay scale outside of the typical seniority or annual raise criteria. HFMA believes having credentialed revenue cycle staff will help healthcare organizations confirm staff proficiency; hold their staff to a higher level of accountability and promote a higher standard of performance; develop talent; support compliance initiatives; and aid in expansion/growth management.



For more information visit www.hfma.org/crcr.

Article 1

According to the State of Alaska's Epidemiology Bulletin, H1N1 influenza activity occurred throughout the summer of 2009 in Alaska, increasing in August, peaking in November and decreasing in December. The 2009-10 influenza season is not over. Laboratory indicators currently show low levels of 2009 H1N1 influenza activity in Alaska but with a possible increase in influenza activity later this year. Clinical indicators based on the levels reported suggest that respiratory pathogens other than influenza virus are now responsible for the bulk of acute respiratory infection

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hospitalizations.

Article 2

A national report on state oral health policies gives Alaska a grade B for providing services intended to improve children's access to dental care. The report noted Alaska's efforts in providing dental access for children enrolled in Medicaid, dental reimbursement increases authorized in the 2008 and 2009 legislative sessions and dental sealant activities in rural and village communities. The Department of Health and Social Services' Alaska Oral Health Program still confirms high rates of serious dental disease among Alaska's Kindergartners and preschoolers. Low-income children, Alaska Native children, and children from racial/ethnic minority groups have rates of early childhood tooth decay that are among the highest in the nation. Access to early dental care is limited for many Alaska's children. DHSS is currently studying how to implement Medicaid reimbursement to medical providers for provision of these preventive dental services.

Article 3

The Alaska Health Care Commission presented their 2009 Report/2010-2014 Strategic Plan to Governor Parnell, the Alaska State Senate and the Alaska House of Representatives in January of 2010. The Commission was tasked with providing recommendations for and fostering the development of a statewide plan to address the quality, accessibility and availability of health care for all citizens of the state. The Commission focused on developing a vision of a transformed health care system for Alaska, including goals and values for guiding decision making; defining a comprehensive health care system transformation strategy; indentifying, analyzing and developing recommendations regarding a few critical priority issues; outlining a 5-year strategic planning framework, including identification of a preliminary set of measures for tracking the performance of Alaska's health care system and issues and strategies for future analysis and policy recommendation development.

The Commission identified five priority issues for analysis. (1) The consumer's Role in Health and Health Care, (2) Statewide Leadership, (3) Healthcare Workforce, (4) Health Information Technology and (5) Access to Primary Care of Medicare Patients. Regarding items number five – Access for Medicare Patients, the Report noted that in 2008 a study found that only 17% of Anchorage primary care physicians accept new Medicare patients compared to 61% nationally. The Commission recognizing that their ability to drive changes in federal policy is limited, felt the most effective state-based strategy for addressing this access problem is to increase the supply of Primary Care Providers. An Internal Medicine Residency program would have a double benefit by producing more Primary Care Physicians who specialize in adults and who are more likely to stay in Alaska to practice. This program would also create a clinical practice that would accept Medicare patients.

Article 4

State Government in Juneau has shown a deliberate attempt to work together for a bipartisan a bill as soon as

possible, finance committee members said. It includes a 4.3 billion in general fund spending for state agencies. This figure is up from the 4.1 billion for the current fiscal year. Growth is in several areas, including entitlement programs such as Medicaid and education.

Meg Flanagan is an Organizational Solutions Consultant with HFMA. Cathy LeMay is Director of Patient Accounts at Southcentral Foundation in Anchorage Alaska.

HFMA's CRCR self-study course and exam

I would like to take a moment to share with HFMA how important the CRCR Program has been to me.

I am Jennifer Brantley. I have worked for the Southcentral Foundation Patient Accounts Department in Anchorage, Alaska, for the last five years. I have always been interested in certifications that would challenge my knowledge of the healthcare finance area as a whole, whether it was the revenue cycle, medical coding to support the documentation for reimbursement, electronic claims resolution for faster payments and decreased denials, and compliance.

Cathy LeMay, my Director for the last five years, knew my thirst for knowledge and quest for new certifications. Cathy encouraged all the Patient Accounts Management (PAM) employees to join HFMA and utilize all the training opportunities that HFMA offers. When HFMA introduced CRCR as a new Career development tool, Cathy and the PAM Managers Michelle Meza and Heather Goecke, who are also HFMA members, researched the CRCR program and decided that our employees would greatly benefit from obtaining the CRCR Certification. The management team made it not only fun and challenging but also easy for the staff to study the learning modules while taking a break at work or even being able to utilize the program at home on our own time. The challenge, the first PAM team member to pass the exam won a gift card; I was the first to pass the learning module and exam chose a Visa Gift card.

In 2003, I completed a program with a local technical/career academy and obtained the

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National Certified Insurance and Coding Specialist certification and I maintain that certification with annual CEU'S. In 2006, I earned another certification, the Certified Professional Coder-Hospital certification, thru American Academy of Professional Coders and I maintain that certification with annual CEU'S as well. My next step will be to focus on a college degree and on my annual CEU'S to maintain my certifications.

Thanks to being a HFMA member and a Credentialed Revenue Cycle Representative, no matter where I work within the healthcare industry, I will be able to show and prove not only my years of hands-on work experience within the healthcare finance but also my will and desire to further my knowledge base and grow with the ever changing healthcare financial world as a whole.

I am a member of HFMA and I am very proud to be among the first twenty to pass the CRCR exam and carry the title of Credentialed Revenue Cycle Representative.

Jennifer Brantley, NCICS, CPC-H. CRCR
Patient Accounts Specialist III
Southcentral Foundation
Anchorage Alaska

Springtime Winter Wonderland

By Larry Barsukoff and Jennifer Mitchell

Spring officially starts March 21st. In Alaska, this is less an absolute and more like a polite suggestion. March in Alaska can be the cruelest time of year. Having made it through six months of limited daylight hours, sub-zero temperatures, and ice-packed roads and sidewalks, March's blowing blizzards mock Puxatony Phil's predictions and test the will of even the hardest Alaska sourdough (term of endearment for long-time Alaskans). In February, the days gain minutes of sunlight and everyone knows that the slightest touch of warmth returning to the sunshine means winter's worst has nearly past. And everyone knows April will surely bring warmer temperatures to melt the piles of snow and free the rivers from winter's icy grip. But nature exacts a terrible price by dumping March

in between.

In an effort to reduce the torment and suffering associated with cabin fever brought on by months of winter, and then made worse by the not-quite-there-yet nature of March weather, the pioneering people of Alaska have created their own celebrations and events to relieve stress and have a laugh at the winter conditions that cause so much misery. The celebrations have their roots in the daily activities of the pioneers who settled Alaska and pay tribute to the unique challenges they overcame. Today's Alaskans take great pride in the spirit of those pioneers as well as in the unique lifestyle and opportunities Alaska provides.



Iditarod Dog Sled Race

You have most likely heard about the Iditarod, hailed as the "Last Great Race." It is a dog sled race run over a course more than 1,000 miles between

Anchorage and Nome. The Iditarod Trail was originally used as a mail and supply route from coastal towns to gold camps in the interior of Alaska. Mail and supplies went in via dog sled; gold came out via dog sled. The only time this could be done was during winter when swamps, known as muskeg, and rivers were frozen providing a solid surface on which to travel.

Airplanes came into use in the 1920s and continue to speed people and supplies across Alaska today. In 1925, an airplane was not selected, however, to deliver a lifesaving serum to victims of diphtheria in Nome. The Iditarod celebrates this dramatic ordeal as well as what was once the only means of transportation into Interior Alaska and which continues to be important in large portions of the state still without roads.

Along the race route, mushers battle freezing temperatures (remember springtime is kind of a joke up here), long hours of darkness, jagged mountain ranges, frozen rivers, dense forests,

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desolate tundra, and miles of windswept coast. They have to deal with wildlife, with competing racers, long stretches of solitude miles away from any resupply locations, and all this while keeping their dogs healthy and cooperating.

The Iditarod is a source of great pride for Alaskans. Its competitors this year include a high school gym teacher, cancer survivors, and a former fashion model. Even the stars of the Iditarod race, which include Lance Mackey, Dee Dee Jonrowe, and Martin Busser, seem more like your typical but colorful next door neighbors instead of hard-driving competitors who overcome incredibly difficult conditions. This may explain its appeal. Living in Alaska is certainly easier today than it was 50 years ago. But it still requires a certain toughness of spirit to make it through an Alaska winter. Every Alaskan making it through March to break-up in April one more time has some of the toughness embodied by the Iditarod racers.

In another harbinger of spring, a group of intrepid Anchorage citizens in the 1930s, being without the benefit of satellite TV and central heating, realized they were really tired of tending fires, darkness, and shoveling snow. They decided to create a festival celebrating the end of winter which also happened to coincide with the time of year miners and trappers traveled in from the Interior, on their dog sleds, to sell their wares and gather provisions for the upcoming year. Officially known as the "Fur Rendezvous Festival," Fur Rondy offers an excuse to get out of the house, get bundled up in warm clothes, and join an international assortment of visitors in downtown Anchorage for the Carnival, the Grand Parade, and the chance to run with reindeer. Although running with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain, may have more international notoriety, the Fur Rondy run offers the chance to pet the four-footed pursuers while savoring reindeer sausage from street vendors. Parents with small children no doubt have to answer countless inquires into the health of Santa's fleet but have a perfect teaching opportunity about the importance of making the team.

The Fur Rondy is not just about fun and games. The Official Fur Rondy Fur Auction has been

associated with the festival from the very beginning and continues to honor the importance of the fur trade to Alaska's economic history. In addition to the fun, games, and great food, the Rondy provides a highly diverse atmosphere with displays, ceremonies, and cultural attractions of all kinds celebrating the incredible variety of people calling Alaska home. Additionally, traditional arts and crafts are displayed at various events supported by groups both public and private at venues all over the city.



Fairbanks BP World Ice Art Championship

Up in the interior city of Fairbanks, citizens looked around at all the snow and frozen water and realized their ice might work pretty well on the competitive ice carving scene. In 1988, organizers hoped to create an annual event by reviving ice carving in Fairbanks and invited carvers from Chicago and China to come

exhibit their skills in the city. That first year, ice was actually purchased in Seattle and shipped to Alaska for fear that the local ice, which reached a record thickness of 54 inches in 1998, would not be of a suitable quality for carving. In just another of the countless ways natural works better than artificial, the ice in Fairbanks was found to be of superior quality and is now widely considered the best ice in the world for carving. Fairbanks' naturally grown ice is exported to Anchorage and then shipped as far away as the Bahamas and Israel.

Since those humble beginnings, the festival has come to be known as the BP World Ice Art Championship. This year's event will have 100 artists from over 20 different countries. The event runs an entire month and expects more than 45,000 visitors from both inside and outside Alaska. All this activity has a real economic impact for the city as well. With the increase of tourists, both domestic and international,

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arriving to witness the artistic icy splendor and services purchased by the Ice Alaska organization, which include equipment rental, lodging, fuel oil, gasoline, food, and other goods and services, the Fairbanks community receives a very real benefit after a long winter's break.

Finally, the Nenana Ice Classic and its associated event, "Tripod Days," may be the epitome of using what was on hand to stave off winter's boredom and gloom. A group of surveyors working for the Alaska railroad camping on the frozen shores of the Tanana River back in 1917 decided to set up a betting pool to help pass the time while they were waiting for the solid river to thaw so that boats with supplies could reach them. The object of their bet: When will the river ice break?



"Tripod Days" official timing mechanism detects ice movement

Since there isn't too much else to do in Nenana during the winter, this lottery has continued into the present day. For \$2.50, entrants all over the state

can purchase the chance to guess when the river will once again start to flow. During Tripod Days in Nenana, the official timing mechanism is installed. It is a 26-foot tall wooden tripod set-up into trenches dug into the river ice. The ice on the river is currently more than four feet thick. When the river ice breaks up, the tripod moves and trips a wire that stops a clock, showing the exact minute the ice began to move.

Dozens of locations across the state sell tickets. Some people reading this may roll their eyes and equate wagering on ice breaking to taking odds on paint drying but the lottery has paid out over ten million dollars in prize money over the years with the winning pool being near \$300,000 in recent years. As you can see, Alaskan take signs of spring very seriously.

Larry Barsukoff is a new HFMA member in Anchorage, Alaska. Larry is the Regional Contract Program Manager for Providence Health & Services Alaska.

CORPORATE SPONSORS

The Chapter would like to thank the following companies for 2009 - 2010 sponsorships:

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Greetings from Council 1 Chairperson

by Peggi Ann Amstutz | Cascade Medical Center

Our current year is winding down and we have good news to report from Council 1

Sponsorship: To date we have collected \$66,000 in sponsorship dollars!! We are adding another category of sponsorship in 2010-2011; Scholarships to cover Registration Fees for Provider members to attend our conferences. We are excited about this opportunity to help enable our Provider members to attend Chapter events!! More details will be available in the next newsletter on how to apply for a Scholarship. Please email me if you would like to be apart of the group drafting up the Scholarship P&P at peggianna@cascademedicalcenter.org.

Registration: Our Registration Desk can always use volunteers at Chapter events. If you are attending a future event, please consider volunteering to help out at registration. It is a great way to meet other Chapter members and put a 'face' to the name you might have been emailing or chatting with on the phone.

Program Evaluations: Our February meeting had phenomenal evaluations. The evaluations were packed with suggestions for future meeting topics and those ideas were passed along to the five Committee Chairs who help secure speakers for our meetings.

Trade Faire: We sold 44 booths and collected more than \$53,000 in sponsorship support. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all of our sponsors who support our events!! It must be said again: We cannot do it without our Sponsors; they help keep our meeting expenses affordable so we can offer lower registration fees, have awesome social events and bring in top quality speakers to enhance our learning experience!

Coming soon to an area near you.....Focus Groups! Stay tuned for an email with more information on this HOT TOPIC!!

So as you can see, Council 1 has been busy helping to create an awesome WA/AK HFMA chapter experience for everyone! ■

Provider Membership Outreach Focus Groups

by Rik Lewis | Moss Adams LLP

Your Washington/Alaska chapter is committed to providing high quality education to you and your staff. Chapter membership continues to grow annually and attendance at our quarterly meetings continues to grow despite tough economic times.

In order for us to maintain our chapter's success, it is extremely important that we meet the current needs of chapter while anticipating the educational requirements of the future.



Chapter officers and directors start preparing 1 to 2 years prior to each quarterly meeting. One of the ways we stay on top of trends and educational demands are by conducting annual surveys. During the annual membership retreat held last month, we agreed to take the survey approach one step further; to offer face to face outreach meetings at several locations. HFMA is coming to you!

The WA/AK chapter has one of the strongest vendor support communities across the country. We are thankful for their contribution, but without providers, none of this is possible. These meetings are focused on providers. We are here and we are listening!

Focus group meetings will be held in key locations through out Washington and one meeting in Alaska in order to reach the greatest number of providers. For those who cannot make the meetings, we will offer telephone conference calls and surveys. The dates and locations of these meetings are in the process of finalization but we do know ~

- **Where:** Most will be held a provider facility where possible, we have at least 5 locations

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- throughout Washington on 1 in Alaska
- **When:** In April, during the work week, probably from 5 pm to 6:30 pm
- Refreshments and snacks will be provided!!

Here is your opportunity to provide meaningful input about your chapter. Are we serving your needs? If not, how can we better serve your needs? You get the idea! Providers, this is your chance to meet with chapter leadership and provide feedback, make suggestions and provide input on our future, and of course offer constructive criticism to improve the quality of our educational program to meet the greater needs of our provider membership.

Soon you will receive an email with the details, dates and locations of the meetings. Please register using the Cvent registration link provided in the email to select the location you would like to attend and follow the simple registration steps (no charge, we just need a head count at each location) to confirm your attendance. This is not limited to HFMA provider members, but all providers. Bring your co-workers and expose them to your HFMA Chapter.

We are here and we are listening! See you there! ■



Would you like to check your progress toward a Founders Merit Award?

Individual scoring records for the Founders Merit

Award program are maintained for chapter members by LCC Council III.

To receive a copy of your record, please contact Tom Muller

Telephone: (360) 459-8994
Email: tjwashington@reachone.com

Confidence

by Jim Heilsberg,
CFO/CIO/Facility Planner, CPA, FHFMA

Ever had a time where your confidence has been shaken due to making a mistake or two or three? If so this story is for you.

I had a terrible, no good, very bad day. I look back and there were several things that I can now see clearly that I did not see at the time that were major factors as to why I had a terrible, no good, very bad day.

The day was a Tuesday and two days prior my oldest sister had gone into the hospital with a life threatening condition. My sister came through the surgery well, but I can look back and see that my emotions were being impacted with worry for her in the back of my mind.

First bad thing -

I had several projects happening at the time as well as meetings. The day progressed and then it hit. I had forgotten to follow through on an item relating to a new piece of software that was impacting every person in the organization. Others had already jumped into action. We all created a plan and implemented it.

Second Bad Thing -

The day before my mother in-law had been asked to watch my grandson as my wife went to an appointment. My grandson is quite a handful. Contributing factors were he had a couple of bites of birthday cake at our house and then had some more cake at Great Grandma's. My mother in-law had a tiger by the tale. Bradyn somehow grabbed an open bottle of honey and decided to play catch me if you can. Great Grandma tried to catch him. She now questions why at 81 she made this decision because she fell and hurt herself and today she had to get to the doctor to check for a broken jaw. The funny and not so funny part of story is when she fell, Bradyn thought she was playing and that it was pile on grandma time. Kids.... Needless to say, she did not think it was very funny. While my wife was the one dealing with all of this, it was

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hfma washington / alaska chapter
healthcare financial management association

Job Opportunities

TITLE	ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	CONTACT
Clinical Analyst	Franciscan Health System	Tacoma, WA	click for more information
Controller	Mason General Hospital	Shelton, WA	chawley@masongeneral.com
Controller	Providence Health & Services	Renton, WA	click for more information
Director, Contracting Compliance	Providence Health & Services	Renton, WA	click for more information
HIM Manager	Cascade Healthcare Community	Bend, OR	karen.turner@expresspros.com
Manager, IS Application Support	Legacy Health	Portland, OR	click for more information
Manager, Patient Financial Services	Valley Medical Center	Renton, WA	click for more information
Manager, Professional Fee Business Office	Providence Health & Services	Renton, WA	click for more information
Patient Accounts Manager	Southcentral Foundation	Anchorage, AK	click for more information
Patient Accounts Supervisor	Harrison Medical Center	Silverdale, WA	click for more information
Revenue Integrity Manager	UW Medicine Health System	Seattle, WA	click for more information

NATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Whether you're climbing the ladder or you've reached the top, you must stay continuously focused on your career. HFMA gives you a distinct advantage every step of the way. Professional certification programs, career self-assessments, employment opportunity updates, resume referral services, mentoring opportunities, and national and local leadership opportunities let you have a hand in shaping the future of the industry and the profession.

To access HFMA National's Job Bank please click here! [click here!](#)

For more information on these listings or to include a listing, please contact Kimie Delos Reyes at (360) 567-3594 or email at: kimie@hawesfinancial.com

See also National HFMA's website (www.hfma.org) for additional job listings.

[Last Update: March 1, 2010]



still on my mind.

Third Bad Thing –

At the end of the day I was worried, tired and exhausted but I had a big basketball game to referee. I went to the game ready to referee but my mind was mentally tired. I can see clearly when I got there that I was not in best shape to be doing what I was doing.

The game went well until the end of the third quarter. My mental fatigue started to show. At the end of the fourth quarter I did not deal with a situation well and needless to say my confidence was shaken to the core. I spent time following the game kicking myself back and forth like a human hockey puck.

There were other things that had led up to the moment but in general suffice it to say, I had been led to the edge of reality without knowing it and was definitely at the end of a very bad day.



So what do you do when you have a bad day? I can tell you what I did. I went to Dairy Queen and had a Heath Bar Blizzard in chocolate ice cream with hard chocolate drizzled on top. You know what I am talking about, comfort food.

I ate the Blizzard slowly as I drove home to lament to my wife about a bad day and have her tell me it was all right.

How to get your confidence back -

When I finally unloaded my life to my wife she helped me feel a little better. I then went to the internet to find out what to do when you make a mistake. I found the following great article. Four Steps to recovering from a mistake. I had seen the article before but it was great soothing food for my soul in the current situation.

This article helped me bring it back into

perspective.

We all have times when we make mistakes. The question is how to recover from them. This article gives us four concrete things to do.

- 1 Acknowledge the mistake. We need to own it and not hide it. Does not mean you have to tell everyone but you can't keep it to yourself.
- 2 Communicate with others. If it impacts others, let them know what is happening and look to find help from others to help fix it.
- 3 Try to fix the problem. There are three possible remedies, undo, redo or make do.
- 4 Learn the lessons. After the dust settles and the kicking yourself party is over, ask why 5 times to get to the underlying causes of why the mistake happened.

I was able to take these four steps and look at mistakes made during the day and determine what happened and try to put myself back together a little bit more.

The rest of the story –

While the lessons above provided value there is more to the story. What I realized once again, is how significant life is and how situations can impact us more than we realize.

Point 1 - Life can overload us. We live in the crazy American do everything lifestyle. Personal and professional activities contribute to our self

continued on next page...

Share the Wealth



Share your wealth of knowledge by submitting an article or experience for the Northwest Outlook newsletter ...that way, we are all enriched!

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worth and at times contribute to wearing us down and ultimately to decreasing our self worth by not being able to be successful with everything all the time.

Point 2 – Am I old or young? At 48, some would say I am a youngster and others would say I am an old man. Those that are retiring say I am young and those that I referee with that are mostly in 20's and 30's say I am an old man.

As a referee I am old but started old in profession so am young as well. As a result I often am asking young men and women many years my junior for advice. They often look to me as well for wisdom since I am older. It creates unique discussions.

Point 3 - Confidence is something we gain over time and keep by continuing to learn. We often think that confidence is something we get and don't lose. If you continue to move into areas where you learn, confidence is constantly in flux. You may have it for certain items and be gaining it in others. To retain confidence you have to take risks. You have to continue to learn.

Point 4 - After each mistake I looked to others to gain support from. This is one of the keys to retaining confidence. Looking to support and be supported provides us with people that will help us see things more clearly.

It is the people that we work with that are our biggest benefit in times of trouble. There are some that we know will come to our aid and we would do the same. There are others that we may not know will come to our aid but often they do.

At the beginning of this year I made a commitment to myself to be more encouraging and work to be a servant. I have worked hard to try and encourage others. I try to say encouraging things regularly. While I see progress it is not easy to remember to encourage all the time.

I have also worked to be a servant. It is not

always clear in the moment how to serve but it is easy to see that you need to put others ahead of yourself. It is not easy. There are a few people that are gifted and can constantly put others first. I am not one of those gifted people but know that putting others ahead of ourselves is what we all need to do. When we put others first we can be part of a much greater good and in the end part of a happier place.

Life happens.

The question is, are you happening along with it? I hope that each of you that read the article take some value away that allows your day to be a little less dark if in fact you just had one of those very bad days. For those of you that already knew much of the above, share with me what you have learned so that maybe I can be prepared for the next bad day and the lessons I can learn from it. ■



Mark Your Calendar

June 20-23, 2010

HFMA ANI

Annual National Institute



**Gaylord Opryland Resort
& Convention Center**

Nashville, TN

SEE YOU THERE!



New Members

The Washington/Alaska Chapter is pleased to announce the following new members:

Marion Aebersold

Chad Coder

Surgical Information Systems

Shannon Driscoll

Washington State University

Julieanna Dunbar

Olympic Medical Center

Joel Flugstad

La Donna Flynn

CHAN

Virginia Fraley

Central Washington Hospital

Brenda Giordano

LYNX Medical Systems,
a Picis company

Robert Grannum

Kelli Harbert

TransUnion

Laura Jarrett

Providence Health & Service
WA/MT Region

Bryce Kerker

Washington Health Care
Facilities Authority

Jonathan Lakey

Michael R. Bell & Company, PLLC

Jeannette Larson

Central Washington Hospital

Tim McLaughlin

SightLife

Kent Mosbrucker

Columbia Basin Health Association

Bob Nebel

Genelex Corporation

Diane Nosbisch

Arctic Slope Native Association

Timothy O'Connell

Michael R. Bell & Company, PLLC

Jo-Ann Patao

Anchorage Neighborhood Health

Robert Rang

YKHC

Kerri Schroeder

Bank of America

Anna Simmons

Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corp.

Amy Smith

Group Health Cooperative

Sandy Spencer

Providence Health & Services

Wes Thew

Michael R. Bell & Company, PLLC

Cassie Undlin

Tatum LLC

Peter Valenzuela

PeaceHealth Medical Group

Alicia West

SouthCentral Foundation

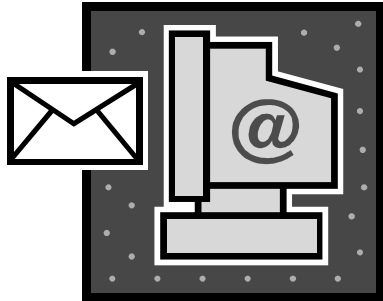
Monica Wickham



**Get
Connected!**

HOW DO I CHANGE MY HFMA INFORMATION?

All of our chapter directory information including e-mail and addresses for the newsletter are received from the National HFMA database.



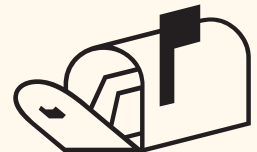
The easiest way to make changes is via the internet. Simply follow these steps to change any of your personal information.

- 1. Log on to <http://www.hfma.org>**
- 2. Go to the membership section**
- 3. Log in using the username and password prompts**
- 4. Follow instructions to access your Profile**
- 5. Edit information.**



You could win \$100 by writing an article for N.W. Outlook! Share your knowledge & experiences with other HFMA Members. You can help make a difference!

Please send information & articles for upcoming newsletters to:



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FAX: 206-215-2344

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fandreasson@outreachservices.com



Rik's
RAC
Corner

by
Rik Lewis
Moss Adams LLP

1st Quarter

Documentation Request Limits CMS has modified the additional documentation request limits for the RAC program in FY 2010 for institutional providers. These limits will be set by HDI (CMS) on an annual basis to establish a cap per campus on the maximum number of medical records that may be requested per 45-day period. A campus unit may consist of one or more separate facilities/practices under a single organizational umbrella; each limit will be based on that unit's prior fiscal year Medicare claims volume. Visit http://www.cms.hhs.gov/RAC/03_RecentUpdates.asp to learn more.



RAC correspondence There have been reports through out the state that HDI RAC correspondence is being sent to incorrect hospital addresses. In some cases, the letters are going to the wrong staff at the hospital, in other cases; the letters are not addressed to any staff person and instead are sent to the main hospital address. CMS is aware of this problem and is working with the RACs to resolve the issue as soon as possible.

What can you do to avoid lost RAC correspondence? Contact HDI today and provide them with the appropriate contact information. CMS requires each HDI to have a web-based system that allows providers to customize their address and provide 2 points of contact. Visit HDI's Web site to confirm your contact information. Please note that website login access is only compatible with Windows Internet Explorer version 7.0 or

The purpose of this quarterly article is to briefly summarize current news, updates to the Medicare Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) program, and report on provider experiences with Region D RAC auditor, Health Data Insights (HDI).



higher! <https://racinfo.healthdatainsights.com/>

Automated Audits HDI is actively conducting automated audits. CMS reports that nationally, RACs have submitted approximately 416 total audit requests and approximately 300 have been approved through CMS' new issues review process.

Complex Audits HDI received CMS approval to target 530 out of a possible 747 DRGs, which HDI has grouped into 48 categories. HDI is primarily engaging in DRG validation audits at this time, which involve coding validation review of the medical record. Most PPS hospitals have received medical record demand letters and the results are pending. CMS reports that Medical Necessity Review (MNR) audits are on hold nationwide. New MNR target issues have been submitted to CMS for approval; reviews are rumored to commence mid-year 2010.

Nationwide Data Collection RACTrac, an AHA-sponsored, Web-based survey to track the impact of RAC activity on hospitals, will start quarterly data collection in early April. AHA created RACTrac to track and summarize the impact of RAC activity on hospitals nationwide. RACTrac is designed to provide timely, reliable data that can be used to advocate for changes to the RAC program going forward. AHA opened up RACTrac to a few hospitals in January 2010 to collect data from those experiencing RAC activity in 2009 and found that more than \$11 million in claims had been targeted in the 32 hospitals



surveyed. You can learn more about RACs and AHA's RACTrac initiative by visiting their Web site: <http://www.aha.org/aha/issues/RAC/ractrac.html>. ■

UPCOMING CHAPTER MEETINGS

DATE

Apr 18-20, 2010

[click for online Brochure](#)

EVENT

HFMA Leadership Training Conference (LTC)

LOCATION

Arizona Grand, Phoenix, AZ



May 26-28, 2010

[click for online Brochure](#)

Joint Meeting w/Idaho Chapter

Davenport Hotel, Spokane, WA



June 20-23, 2010

[click for online Brochure](#)

HFMA Annual National Institute (ANI)

Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center
Nashville, TN



www.waakhfma.org

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