



HIMSS 2009 Informatics Nurse Impact Survey

Sponsored by McKesson

Executive Summary: April 2, 2009

To explore today's changing landscape, a wide range of healthcare professionals were asked to identify the impact that informatics nurses can have on the healthcare information technology (IT) environment. A total of 432 responses were received for the HIMSS 2009 Informatics Nurse Impact Survey, sponsored by McKesson. The results of this survey suggest that informatics nurse professionals play a crucial role across a wide variety of information technology areas. On a scale of one to seven, where one is a low rating and seven is the highest rating, respondents reported an average score of 6.29 with regard to the value informatics nurses bring to the IT systems implementation process. However, even the area with the lowest average rating (selection—5.12) still suggested that informatics nurses bring a high level of value to the IT arena. This research also tested the impact that informatics nurses have in several key areas throughout their organization. Three areas—workflow, user/clinician acceptance and screen flow received an average score of six or higher.

Other key survey results include:

Involvement of Informatics Professionals: Eighty-five (85) percent of respondents noted that individuals with a clinical background are employed in the Information Services (IS) department at their organization. The vast majority of these organizations employ individuals with a nursing background. Additionally, a high percentage of organizations employ individuals with nursing backgrounds to work with IT, although these employees are not part of their formal IT environment.

Role of Informatics Nurses: Informatics nurses are involved in a wide variety of job responsibilities relating to IT. Nearly all respondents noted that informatics nurses play a significant role in user education. Informatics nurses are also widely involved in system implementation, user support, workflow analysis and gaining buy-in from end users.

Value and Impact of Informatics Nurses: Respondents believe that informatics nurses involved in system analysis, design, selection, implementation and optimization of IT have the greatest impact on patient safety (6.21), workflow (6.17) and user/clinician acceptance (6.15). The area with the least impact was integration with other systems (6.03). These findings suggest the informatics nurse is a driver of quality of care and enhanced patient safety within their organization.

Success of Informatics Nurses: Making sure that IT does no harm (5.83) was the concept with the highest average rating relative to the area of impact in which

informatics nurses have the most success. Other areas receiving high average scores are administration of the correct patient medication (5.58); improving clinical reporting (5.55) and improving quality reporting (5.51).

Involvement of Informatics Nurses with Emerging Technologies: Eighty-one percent of respondents whose organization was pursuing medical device integration indicated that informatics nurses were involved with this initiative. Informatics nurses are also highly involved with smart devices and remote monitoring.

It is clear from this research that the value of informatics nurses is widely recognized in the healthcare IT industry. Most of the hospitals and care delivery organizations represented in this research employ informatics nurses, who hold a wide variety of roles within their organizations. Non-provider organizations, such as vendors, also employ informatics nurses. The role of informatics nurses varies widely—from user education to system implementation to user support to workflow analysis to gaining buy in from end users. At least 80 percent of respondents with an informatics nurse at their organization reported that informatics nurses played each of the roles identified in section five above.

Despite the wide variety of roles that informatics nurses are playing, respondents suggested that they are not spending as much time as they should in the areas of system selection and system optimization. This suggests that respondents understand that the role of informatics nurses is moving past bringing only tactical experience to the point where they are able to act in a more strategic fashion. This underscores the value informatics nurses bring to the clinical (not just nursing) IT solutions used at their organization.

Informatics nurses are also poised to play a critical role as organizations continue to expand their focus on leveraging the data contained in their electronic medical records. With the passage of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, which will provide incentives to healthcare organizations that “meaningfully use” electronic medical records, informatics nurses will be able to apply their ability not only to understand all sides of the IT process, but to act as a translator between those who understand the language of the technology and the language and needs of clinicians and patients.

The role of informatics nurses is not limited to IT; this research also suggests that informatics nurses play an instrumental role with regard to patient safety, change management and usability of systems as evidenced by their impact on quality outcomes, workflow, and user acceptance. These additional areas highlight the value of informatics nurses—their expertise truly translates to the adoption of more effective, higher quality clinical applications in healthcare organizations.

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