Managing change proactively within the current HIM professional domain

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Change is inevitable. In a progressive country, change is constant[1].

These words, spoken in 1867 by the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, can equally apply to components of the broader society in the 21st Century. The observation is particularly appropriate for health information management and for the theme of this issue of the Journal (the changing health information service [HIS] work environment) and reflected in many of the papers included in the Issue. As professionals working in the area of health information management, we need to be progressive and adapt quickly to the constant changes that are fundamental to our discipline or we will be left behind. For example, Helen Cooper's discussion of this issue from an educational perspective challenges Health Information Managers (HIMs) to consider that the change is not about 'roles'; rather, it is about the evolving breadth, depth and scope of the discipline itself. Helen suggests that 'we need to ensure currency of practical skills through ongoing education and training, undertake active succession planning for the next generation workforce and continue to ensure that the discipline retains relevance in a changing world' (Cooper 2009). The formation of the Australian Health Informatics Education Council (AHIEC) provides a timely opportunity to review the current state of tertiary education and training for health information managers and informaticians. As you will see in this issue of *HIMJ*, the contributors provide inspiring examples of HIM careers that 'boldly go where no one has gone before' (Star Trek Next Generation 1987[2]).

How can we proactively manage change within our current professional domain? One way involves a strategic approach to career development. Look around you in your organisation, your networks, professional associations or healthcare generally. Is your career aligned with the strategic direction of your organisation? It is well documented within human resources literature that strategic career management, which involves the direct alignment of one's personal career goals with goals of the organisation for which one works, will maximise professional success. For example, if your career objective is to work within health informatics (HI) projects, then aligning your career with organisations that are committed to achieving this objective is critical. Sari McKinnon's professional profile is a perfect example of strategic career management in action. Her contribution titled 'Enterprise architecture in the Information Services Division, Ministry of Health Holdings, Singapore' is an inspiring journey and one from which we can learn many lessons (McKinnon 2009).

Sandra Leggat's article, 'A guide to performance management for the Health Information Manager', suggests that one does not need to be a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to be a strategic leader in an organisation (Leggat 2009). Sandra cites Embertson's comment that 'middle managers [in health care] are like heroes, championing the ideals and objectives of an organisation. Skills in transformational leadership are essential for effective health information managers.' According to Sandra, this means ensuring you are a leader who seeks not merely to work within bureaucratic boundaries but to create transformational change. Whether transforming your workplace through best practice performance management planning linked to Balanced Score Card measures or leading a project within your organisation that facilitates transformational change, becoming a transformational leader should be an integral

1   Disraeli, B. (1867). Speech on Reform Bill of 1867, Edinburgh, Scotland.
2   TV series 1987-1994

component of your performance development plans.

We have only to look at the journey undertaken by Julia Wilkins within the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) to see transformational leadership in action in a unique healthcare environment. Julia demonstrates that leveraging core health information management skills for the assessment of current business processes and employing strategic visioning laid the foundation for the RFDS Electronic Medical Record (EMR) plans (Wilkins 2009). Julia has aligned her career development with RFDS strategic goals to pursue a career in project management, leading the state-wide rollout of an EMR. Julia's commitment to challenge the status quo within the RFDS will have a profound transformational impact on how that organisation's health records will be managed in the future.

This issue of the Journal has two clinical classification contributions. Michel, Ngheim and Jackson (2009) investigate the utilisation of ICD-10-AM for monitoring hospital acquired infections. While key limitations to the use of ICD-10-AM are identified, it can still enable proactive management and monitoring of complications. The authors recognise that '[electronic health records] (EHRs) may have the functionality to link codes and maintain a sequence of events (or time stamps for diagnoses and procedures) in each patient episode.' While ICD-10-AM has been fundamental to Casemix funding within Australia, it will not be suitable within the EHR environment. Therefore, it is timely that Michelle Bramley and colleagues from the National Electronic Health Transitional Authority (NEHTA) discuss plans for the National Clinical Terminology and Information Service (NCTIS) (Bramley et al. 2009). We must all play a role in engaging and collaborating with NEHTA to ensure SNOMED CT is maximised for practical utilisation within the Australian EHR environment.

Jamal, McKenzie and Clark (2009) explore the relationship between health information technology and the quality of care, and to do this, they performed a comprehensive review of the literature, concluding that health information technology improves adoption of clinical guidelines adherence and reduced errors. However, patient outcomes proved more difficult to measure, with fewer studies demonstrating a direct positive impact on patient outcomes. The authors identify the need for more studies focused on evaluating the impact of health information technology on patient outcomes. It is recommended that further research into workflow re-design, organisational change management and project management would be valuable. The challenge for health information management professionals in project management roles is to better evaluate the benefits to patient outcomes and contribute to the literature.

Challenges for today's health information management professionals

Much can be learnt from our HIM colleagues in this issue of *HIMJ*. With strategic thinking, the core skill set of the HIM can become a launching pad for many new and exciting career possibilities. Leverage your knowledge of healthcare processes and workflows if you plan to take on a health informatics project role. HIMs have strong verbal and written communication skills that are critical for business analysis and understanding of the requirements for health information systems development. Understanding business processes within healthcare was recently recognised by the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME) in the United States as one of the most critical skill sets for ensuring the success of Electronic Health Record projects. Whether you are planning an operational career within a healthcare organisation or a project role, there are some important elements to incorporate into your professional development planning. Some of these are covered by contributors to this Issue of *HIMJ*.

Project management

The discipline of project management is more important today than in the past because of the increasing application of information technology (IT) within the healthcare environment. The prevalence of EHR projects requires a concerted effort by HIMs to become more than just familiar with project management methodologies. Formal project methodologies are designed to ensure thorough processes are in place to execute groups of tasks in a structured manner, with a finite start

and finish date culminating in the delivery of a product or service.

Fundamental to the future HIS work environment is the EHR, which is recognised as one of the most complex transformation projects involving the application of IT. This is because EHR projects cut across organisational boundaries and facilitate significant transformational change of healthcare processes. If you plan to be a project team member or project manager, developing a thorough understanding or competency in project management methodologies is critical to your career and the success of EHR projects. My own historical operational leadership roles have provided the foundation for my new career in project/program management.

Transformational leadership

One particular pearl of wisdom to take away from this Issue concerns transformational leadership, covered in Sandra Leggat's contribution (Leggat 2009). Whether you manage an operational/project team or are a team member, HIMs must learn to be 'transformational leaders' and be prepared to work beyond organisational bureaucracy. Opportunities abound for leaders who are prepared to ensure their workplace or service transforms to meet the changing HIS work environment. These will often be the work environments that attract top talent and retain employees over a long period of time. EHR projects play an important role in transforming healthcare processes, a factor that is critical for project managers to understand.

Change management

It is well recognised that EHR or IT projects in general usually involve a component of organisational change management. Projects often fail to acknowledge the impact, complexity and risk that organisational change management has on successful deployment of IT solutions. Project planning must incorporate required business changes to successfully realise the benefits of deploying IT solutions. Organisational change management within IT projects is now a well-recognised discipline internationally. It involves the utilisation of models of change management that involve a scientific and methodical approach to stakeholder engagement, from initiation

through to deployment. IT projects are littered with failures due to poor solution design, which is ultimately due to inadequate engagement and consultation with stakeholders. Within the Mater Health Services (Mater) EHR Program[3] we have formalised a Change Facilitator role to manage the 'business change' required to successfully move from the 'as is' to the 'to be' process state. Change roles are new professional career paths for HIMs being led at the Mater by Mary-Ellen Vidgen. Mary-Ellen is being mentored and professionally developed in IT change management methodologies by a change management professional. It is intended to retain and apply the change management skill set within all of the Mater's EHR projects that involve significant organisational change impact.

Information technology competency

Last but not least is the ever-increasing number of new tools being developed to manage health information. I am not suggesting that HIMs undertake courses in understanding IT infrastructure such as Local Area Networks (LANs) , Wide Area Networks (WANs), VMware (software product that enables virtualisation of servers) and Storage Area Networks (SANs), and neither do I recommend software programming courses. Of greater relevance is an understanding of software development approaches with proven results in meeting requirements of stakeholders. Understanding basic hardware and software concepts is fundamental if one plans to work within an EHR project. At the Mater, the health information management and IT functions are integrated, which offers plenty of opportunities for HIMs to develop a sound knowledge of IT technical terms and concepts. If you are not aligned with IT in your organisation then you should make it a priority to better understand IT tools.

Finally, a basic understanding of the discipline of Business Analysis (BA) in IT projects is also recommended. The BA role facilitates the critical

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3　The Mater is using formal Program Management (The Standard for Program Management – Project Management Institute – PMI) methodologies to roll out an EHR within and outside its four walls. The EHR Program includes a collection of enterprise-wide projects that, grouped together, enable a staged transition from a paper to an electronic record.

function of translating business requirements into functional specifications of software that enable software developers to produce a product. HIMs within the EHR Program at the Mater have leveraged strong communication skill sets to become highly respected Business Analysts.

The adoption of EHRs in Australia

Australia has started its journey toward an EHR with the establishment of NEHTA and the development of key pieces of infrastructure such as unique identifiers for patients and providers. While the pace of change and the number of achievements to date has been disappointing, we have at least made a start. The prevalence of clinical practice management systems in ambulatory settings (GP and private specialist practices) is beginning to drive higher expectations for the availability of EHR systems in the acute hospital environment. At the Mater, we have observed important changes in attitudes toward EHRs in hospitals. Our clinicians supported the capital investment to rollout an enterprise EHR (due to compelling patient safety and clinical efficiency benefits) foregoing some of 'the things that go ping'!

As health information management professionals, we must seek to partner with health informatics peak bodies. I believe that the domain of health informatics (defined as application of IT within healthcare) presents an opportunity rather than a threat to the health information management profession. There are many new and varied roles emerging that HIMs can occupy within the health informatics domain. Initiatives such as AHIEC offer prime opportunities to better define health information management and health informatics in the Australian context. I am pleased that Vicki Bennett is co-chair of AHIEC, with a direct voice on behalf of health information management professionals. Peak bodies for health information management and health informatics in the United States have determined collaborative models between the two disciplines. This should also remain a priority within the Australian context.

I would like to conclude with some food for thought regarding career prospects and the work environment. A colleague who manages a transformational change project within the Mater's Pathology Service recently introduced me to these words of Rudy Giuliani: *Change is not a destination, just as hope is not a strategy.*[4] This statement embodies the essence of how we might approach professional development for the changing HIS work environment.

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4   Giuliani, R. (2008). Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani's speech at the Republican Convention on September 3, 2008. Available at: http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=94254610 (accessed 4 September 2009).