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## **Foundation of Research and Education of AHIMA Teams with HRS to Study Radiology Coding, Announces Results**

CHICAGO, February 6, 2009—A major job function within the health information management (HIM) profession is coding medical diagnoses and procedures for administrative, financial, clinical and research purposes. Healthcare providers who provide radiology diagnostic and/or treatment procedures must code all such exams and/or procedures to meet federal regulations and reimbursement requirements. The nuances of radiology coding and increased federal oversight have made radiology coding particularly challenging in recent years. In addition, anecdotal information suggests that hospitals and imaging centers may experience difficulty staying ahead of the curve in radiology coding.

Health Record Services ([HRS](#)), a leading provider of expert coding and audit services for healthcare, and the Foundation of Research and Education (FORE) of AHIMA, teamed up in 2008 to conduct an exploratory study of radiology coding in health information management (HIM) practice. The research was led by Melanie Brodnik, PhD, RHIA, Director and Associate Professor HIM and Systems at the School of Allied Medical Professions, The Ohio State University, and the results were presented at the AHIMA National Convention and Exhibit in October 2008.

### **Results Identify HIM Involvement, Productivity Standards and Challenges in Radiology Coding**

“For 73% of AHIMA members surveyed, facility radiology coding, physician practice radiology coding, or both was part of their responsibility, including diagnosis, procedure and modifier coding,” mentions Brodnik. This finding highlights the need for HIM and radiology departments to work together more closely in a mutual effort to improve radiology coding accuracy and compliance.

Productivity standards ranged from seven cases per hour (for interventional radiology coding) to thirty-one cases per hour for diagnostic radiology exams coded from reports. Individual radiology reports are being used as the source document in the majority of cases, 69%, and the majority of organizations (78%) regularly conduct audits of radiology coding. The top five challenges in radiology coding included lack of physician documentation, keeping up with payer rules and edits, lack of continuing education opportunities, access to expert radiology coders, and high volumes of work.

“Radiology coding is a specialty area of coding that has grown in importance with increased federal regulation,” mentions Wendy Coplan, RHIA, President, HRS. Based on research findings, both organizations hope to work with radiology coding experts from other membership or certification organizations to better understand the similarities and/or differences in practice issues and challenges. Lastly, researchers hope to further explore the actual radiology coding processes used by healthcare providers to determine if workflow differences influence the accuracy and quality of radiology coding.

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#### **About HRS**

Health Record Services has been providing expert coding services to the healthcare industry since 1979. The company provides exemplary coding service and coding audits for all patient and facility types. [www.healthrecordservices.com](http://www.healthrecordservices.com).

#### **About FORE**

Created in 1962, FORE is a non-profit 501(c)(3) entity of the American Health Information Management Association, providing opportunities for advancing knowledge, research, education and leadership in health information management.