

Redefining the Role of the Clinical Informaticist

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Abstract

The role of the Clinical Informaticist is rooted in an understanding of the complex workflows of clinical practitioners. Historically, the role has been defined in terms of nursing versus provider support and finds itself at the intersections of Information Technology (IT), Clinical Engineering (CE), Information Services (IS), and Education. Across the continuum of care, we are often challenged to do more with less, to standardize processes, to deliver predictable outcomes, and to provide data which demonstrates value. Informatics-based solutions are often sought to meet such needs. This combined with the rapid pace at which healthcare technology is advancing, a typical healthcare organization is engaged in multiple Informatics initiatives both within and outside of the electronic health record (EHR). As innovation drives advancement, we must assess for perceived value, to promote growth, to collect metrics for evaluation, and most importantly to understand our contribution towards care.

Recognizing the need for Informatics support across the continuum, we have revamped the structure and functionality of our Informatics team. We have effectively merged our legacy nursing and provider informatics teams, to form a joint front as Clinical Informaticists. In doing so, we have expanded our purview of dynamic workflows, and broadened our scope for more inclusive solutions. Our Clinical Informaticists regularly engage multidisciplinary teams, practitioners, builder analysts, and non-clinical staff to collaboratively realize solutions which enhance systems; ultimately improving the quality of care as well as the work environment.

To better support the informatics team, we created a novel Clinical Informaticist role within our EHR that is inclusive of the tools necessary for testing and analysis for all clinical roles. This has allowed us to streamline processes, realize efficiencies, and to apply solutions originally developed under different contexts or scenarios. The team has support at the highest level, reporting directly to the CNO and CMO. The Clinical Informatics team collects detailed notes documenting our work, including ad hoc drop-ins and project timeline reporting. We were able to demonstrate growth in the number of users and departments supported, along with the breadth of issues that we handle. We were able to thus demonstrate the need for additional full-time employees (FTEs). Our Clinical Informatics team has incorporated provider onboarding, offboarding, and provisioning by integrating our Medical Staff Office for a seamless process from credentialing through clinical start. We provide initial and continuing education, and continuously enhance our own knowledge, skills, and certifications as Informaticists.