

Analyze This! Building Analytics Capacity in the Department of Veterans Affairs Workforce

Kathleen Brandt, RN-BC, MS, PMP

Abstract

Problem: The Internet of things in health care will generate massive amounts of data requiring a workforce that is engaged, educated, and capable of harnessing data effectively to improve decision-making, learn more about individual patients and groups, and support population health management. Information gathered from three separate workforce assessments at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) revealed data analytics as the number one identified learning need in the VA informatics and analytics communities. **Project Scope:** Funded by a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the National Coordinator(ONC) for Health Information Technology, the Department of Veterans Affairs, in collaboration with Bellevue College in Washington State, developed and deployed an 8-week online course, Introduction to Health Care Data Analytics. The goal was to educate 1,000 VA staff within two years. The course was widely publicized to a large, diverse audience and generated much enthusiasm and interest. Participating staff represented all disciplines and levels in the VA organization, including informaticians, data analysts, clinicians, quality managers, and administrative and technical staff. For further incentive, physicians, registered nurses, pharmacists, and psychologists were eligible to receive 31 continuing education credits. The course provided foundational knowledge and skills in health care data analytics. Students learned about the tools and techniques used for data analytics in health care organizations and gained insights into effectively communicating data analysis. The curriculum included interactive hands-on learning activities using real world scenarios. Costs associated with the course delivery were minimized by using resources already available, e.g. an on-line textbook, VA Subject Matter Experts as discussion board moderators, and an open source LMS software (Moodle) to deliver the course. No travel costs were incurred. **Results and Benefits:** Within two days of opening course registration, over 1,700 staff enrolled, with another 362 on the waiting list. The course evaluations are overwhelmingly positive with 95% of the students expressing that the course content was relevant to their job; 94% felt that the skills learned in the training will improve their job performance and 90% would recommend this course to their colleagues/coworkers. As a result of taking this course, students reported that they were more equipped to manage and analyze data, utilize data for decision-making, communicate results with their leadership, and improve customer service overall. Further evaluation of the course is planned to be administered 90 days post course completion(March 2017). This will be a Level 3 Evaluation that looks at how well the course impacted job performance. The project team added sessions starting in February and September 2017. Plans to include staff from the Department of Defense are in the works. Content from the course will be publicly available through HHS at healthit.gov starting June 2017.