



This is the information age. Everywhere you go information is collected about you. Some of the most important information collected about you is your personal health information. It is a valuable resource to you, your family, and the doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals who provide your treatment and care.

Data is critical to the healthcare industry today. Sound, accurate, available, and reliable data is the foundation of many decisions at many levels. An exciting transition to electronic health records is occurring in the Health Information Management profession! Technology and innovation promise much in this environment, particularly in the collection, processing, and accessing of health information.

There are many opportunities within healthcare organizations for students that choose the HIM profession. In a data-driven system, HIM professionals will continue to play a central and leading role. Health information management professionals maintain, collect and analyze the data that doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers rely on to deliver quality healthcare. They are experts in managing patient health information and medical records, administering computer information systems and coding the diagnosis and procedures for healthcare services provided to patients.

Fueling the demand for these health data experts is the passage of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which includes provisions for the privacy and protection of patient health information.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), employment of health information management professionals is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations through 2008. The implementation of HIPAA and its health information privacy and security provisions will create an even greater demand than the BLS forecast. On top of strong job prospects, the field offers competitive salaries.

Dakota State University offers HIM education, including the option of on-line courses. Students may obtain a bachelor degree in health information administration, an associate degree in health information technology, or a certificate in healthcare coding. For more information about the HIM programs at DSU, please visit www.departments.dsu.edu/him or contact the HIM Program Director, Dorine Bennett, MBA, RHIA, FAHIMA at Dakota State University, Madison, SD 57042 (605-256-5137 or dorine.bennett@dsu.edu).

