Success Stories

Name of the NPCR Program: Missouri Cancer Registry (MCR)

Title of the Initiative, project or type of data use: Abstracting Fundamentals Workshop

General timeframe (year(s) or months) during which the initiative/project/data use occurred:
Initiated in January 2010; ongoing activity that now occurs twice a year.

Statement of public health issue, concern or problem:
In the past when a hospital hired an untrained registrar, an MCR staff member typically traveled to the hospital to provide two days of one-on-one training. In addition to having a staff member out of the office for two or more days, MCR incurred expenses for transportation, lodging and meals, sometimes receiving minimal compensation from the hospital for lodging expenses. In an effort to improve efficiency and reduce costs, MCR created a 1.5 day training session which is provided twice a year at the central registry.

Evidence that the initiative was effective in addressing the issue, concern or problem:
Since the training program was initiated in January 2010, attendance has grown from 3 to 10 or more registrants per session. Most participants have been small hospital registrars who will use Abstract Plus. A half day session covers Abstract Plus mechanics, casefinding procedures, death clearance procedures, Web Plus mechanics and resources available through the MCR website. Abstracting skills are taught on the second day.

A classroom with a smart board is used for the training sessions so that an Abstract Plus demonstration case can be projected. Participants have the same case in Abstract Plus on laptops at their desks along with a printed copy of the *MCR Abstract Code Manual*. Presenters from our Quality Assurance and Education staff lead the participants though each section of the manual, explaining fields and demonstrating their location in the abstract via the smart board. Students follow along, annotating their manuals and progressing through the abstract on their laptops.   Questions are encouraged along the way and a second staff person is available to help with computer navigation issues.   A final exercise involves students taking a sample case from a de-identified medical record and coding it themselves in Abstract Plus. An answer sheet is provided.   Instructors circulate to answer questions and inspire confidence.   Before they depart, students are told that we expect to hear from them, that questions are a part of registry work (even for experienced registrars) and that they can call our 800 number at any time.

Comments from participant evaluation forms:
"Thanks for encouraging those with little confidence"
"Excited to start this process now!"
"Hands-on exercises reinforced the presentations and built confidence."
"Thanks for helping me to be the best that I can be! "

Implications regarding this successful initiative or project:
In summary, this approach has created a win-win situation. For MCR, travel expenses have been eliminated and multiple MCR staff members can be involved, thereby reducing the burden on any one person. Attendees get time away from other office responsibilities and are

able to focus on abstracting fundamentals during comprehensive hands-on group training. Some new registrars benefit by working exercises with a buddy. In addition, attendees are exposed to a broader range of questions that come up during the group training.

Additionally, having the registrants come to the central registry offices allows them to meet all MCR staff and put a friendly face to the voice that answers MCR's help line. This has in turn fostered continuing communication and education after the formal training session has ended, leading to further improvements in reporting.

Meeting other new registrars is an important additional benefit to this training approach. Participants do not feel as isolated as they did when one-on-one training was given at a hospital.

Medical Records supervisors are encouraged to attend and have remarked that attending the Abstracting Fundamentals Workshop has given them new understanding of the time, level of detail and knowledge that is needed to abstract successfully. They have gained a new respect for this "hat" that they may add to the workload of their Medical Records personnel.

Requiring travel to MCR by participants has not to our knowledge been a deterrent to registration, particularly since the class itself is free. New registrars are hungry for information and hands-on experience to help them learn to do their jobs well. Some seasoned registrars have even wondered if they should take this course as a refresher!