



Fall Institute November 11 - 12, 2010 The Wynfrey Hotel, Birmingham

Believe it or not, another year has just about passed and fall is upon us. For the Alabama Chapter of HFMA, this can only mean one thing: It is time to get ready for the Fall Institute Conference at the Wynfrey Hotel in Birmingham. This year's conference will be held Thursday and Friday November 11th and 12th. Jerry Bridge will kick off the conference as this year's keynote speaker. Jerry's topic will be "Is Too Much Technology Making Us Stupid?" Jerry is the program director for LifeWorks Education, a professional training and development company dedicating to empowering people in the healthcare industry. Over the past twenty years, Jerry has worked with over 70,000 executives and managers on a variety of issues including customer service and communication, stress management and productivity, and billing & collections.

This year's agenda is packed with educational topics for everyone. Some of the general session topics covered at the Institute will be an Alabama Healthcare Update; Hospitals Purchasing Physician Practices Again; and the Future of Healthcare Reform. We are also very excited to host a CFO Panel Open Forum with several CFO's from around the state. In this volatile healthcare market there should be plenty of questions (and hopefully a few good answers)!

As always, there will also be specific educational tracts for those in the fields of Finance, Patient Financial Services and Compliance. Each tract will begin with a "Lunch and Learn Session" followed by two to three additional sessions. Please log onto the website at alabamahfma.org to review the entire agenda for this year's Fall Institute.

Based on the positive responses from last year's Institute, we will also be bringing back Casino Night.

Please make plans to join us Thursday night for appetizers, fellowship, and perhaps (depending on your luck) a few prizes. We are also joining with Region V this year to support the homeless during these troubled economic times. We will be collecting food as well as arranging for volunteer shifts at various homeless shelters. The efforts will last until February 2011, but you can get started by bringing food or monetary gifts to the Fall Institute. Finally, as always, we would like to encourage new HFMA members to show up at 7:00 Thursday morning for a breakfast with our Region V Executive, Lee Ann Burney. This will be a great chance to find out a little more about HFMA and how you can become involved.

We are extremely excited about this year's event and look forward to seeing each of you there!

- Eric Jeffries
Fall Institute, Co Chair



2010-2011 Leadership

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Yolanda Rich, MBA, CHC
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President's Message

Our Chapter's vision is "To be the professional resource of choice for the Healthcare Financial Industry in Alabama". How can we accomplish this? By meeting and exceeding the needs of our members. While our primary focus is on the professional needs, we also look beyond that to the member's personal needs. The Alabama Chapter of HFMA strives to be that organization. As a chapter, we are fortunate to offer several opportunities to promote professional development, education, information, networking and leadership to provide the opportunity for members to excel in healthcare financial management.

Vince Bonetti, President-elect of the Alabama Chapter is in the process of assembling a leadership team for 2011 – 2012. Committee Volunteers, Board Members, Officers and various Chairpersons, as well as leadership of the recruitment of new and membership retention. I encourage you to notify Vince if you are interested in becoming a chapter volunteer. You will find the experience to be quite rewarding.

Commitment to the Chapter – Did you know that less than 10 percent of the membership of the Alabama Chapter of HFMA are involved in positions of leadership and service to the Chapter? I can only imagine the great things that lie ahead if you "STEPPED UP" and became involved! "STEP UP" into a leadership position. Do you desire to progress within the organization into a position of leadership? There are only a handful of members who voice their desire and demonstrate



Stephanie Martin
President

their commitment to become committee chairs, co-chairs, board members, etc. Commitment is the operative word. If you are committed to the personal growth and development as well as committed to service I encourage you to let a current board member or officer know.

"Certify Yourself, Ask Me Why, Ask Me How" Get Certified this Year! There is no excuse good enough to hold you back. Certification sets one apart as being knowledgeable and marketable as a Healthcare professional. At a minimum the certification process will expand your health care knowledge and will demonstrate your dedication to your chosen profession. Certification can open doors for you professionally. Don't forget about the CPAR program for both you and your staff. What a great opportunity to grow and develop your staff. Join the elite group of certified HFMA members. Contact Matt Robbins today and find out about Alabama HFMA certification and preparation for the examination. Matt Robbins, Budget Analyst, St. Vincent's Health System, email: matthew.robbins@stvhs.com

Congratulations extend to Susan Cornejo, CPA, MBA, CHFP. Susan is

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2010-2011 Leadership

DCMS Contact

Randy Comer
Athens-Limestone Hospital

Founders Contact

Donna Ezell, RN
Athens-Limestone Hospital

Newsletter Chair

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St. Vincent's Health System

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St. Vincent Health System

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Tracy McCown

Huntsville Hospital

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Decatur General Hospital

Compliance Chair

Leigh Aufidemorte, RHIA
Callahan Eye Foundation Hospital

Chief Financial Officer of Providence Hospital in Mobile and has joined the elite group of certified HFMA members!

The Alabama Chapter and the HFM Journal are always looking for quality material. Our chapter is loaded with exceptional highly qualified individuals with a wealth of knowledge and expertise. Share the knowledge today! Contact Jerry Smith, CFO, Proxsys, LLC. email: jsmith7@proxsyscorp.com

The Tennessee Chapter is hosting the upcoming Dixie Institute for Region V in February, 2011. Mark Cameron, President of the Tennessee chapter and his dedicated committee members are working to provide nationally recognized speakers to provide relevant and timely subject matter. We are confident that this will be fantastic meeting with excellent educational offerings. I am sure you will not want to miss it! Go to: www.tnhfma.org for further details.

February is Annual Volunteer Month as all five Chapters in Region V will be participating in the "Feed the Homeless" campaign. Generosity can be defined as caring about the needs of others and then acting to meet those needs. Isn't that what our chapter is all about? I encourage each of you to get co-workers, vendors or another member or two and make plans to volunteer in a shelter to feed the homeless. "Feed the Homeless" is an opportunity to "STEP UP" and make a difference in sharing your time by giving to those less fortunate than ourselves. You can help by donating a financial contribution or serving in a food line. You can also cook, clean or simply share a smile or conversation. You can make a special day for someone. At the Fall Institute we will kick off the "Feed the Homeless" campaign by

President's Message



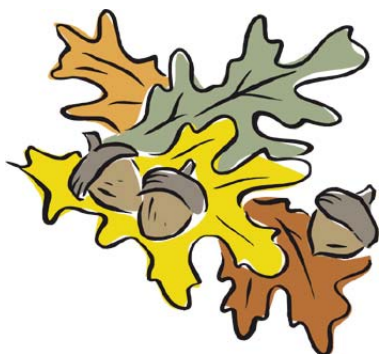
accepting food items and other donations to distribute to area shelters throughout Alabama. Our Special Project Committee will provide further details each month along with our progress in this endeavor. Please contact: Linda.Maddox@na.firstsource.com and EricaStewart@fcb-hsv.com for further details to "STEP UP" get involved.

We are especially grateful to those who provide educational sessions and to our corporate sponsors who make it possible for us to provide quality education to our membership at such an affordable price.

My thanks as well go to all Board and Committee members for your active participation in making this year exceptional. Without each of you our efforts to serve the professional needs of our membership would not be possible! I cannot think of a better way to get to know people and have the opportunity to share information and experiences than through this exceptional group of leaders.

I look forward to seeing each of you at our upcoming Fall Institute at the Wynfrey Hotel in Birmingham. The dates of this meeting are November 11 – 12, 2010. Let's continue to expand our horizons through education and our network of colleagues to solidify our professional foundation. The Fall Institute promises to provide you this opportunity.

- **Stephanie Martin**
President



Keynote Speaker - Jerry Bridge LifeWorks Education

Jerry is a licensed partner with Mission Control Productivity, international training and development company focused on elevating organizational performance and productivity. Jerry is a consultant to and workshop leader for The Practice Management Institute. PMI is a leading provider of continuing education for medical office professionals.

Jerry lives in San Diego, California. His passion is to lead inspiring programs that make a powerful and lasting impact while having great fun along the way!

LifeWorks Education is a professional training and development company dedicated to empowering people in the healthcare industry. We work with individuals, teams, and organizations in order to elevate performance, quality, and personal fulfillment. Our keynotes, workshops, and retreats focus on productivity, teamwork, communication, and customer service. Designed for adult learners, training programs are multi-disciplinary, integrating best practices and knowledge from the world of business, technology, science, and philosophy.



ANI: The Healthcare Finance Conference

Save the Date - June 26 - 29, 2011

The 2011 ANI:

The Healthcare Finance Conference will be at the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention, Orlando, Fla., June 26-29, 2011.

Speaker Information

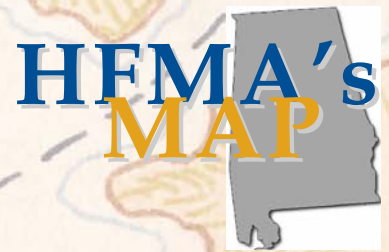
The RFP for the 2011 ANI is now closed. Look for program information after January 1, 2011.

Highlights from the 2010 ANI: The Healthcare Finance Conference

The Healthcare Finance Conference was held at the Sands Expo Center and Venetian/Palazzo Resort in Las Vegas, Nevada, June 20-23, 2010.



HFMA's MAP: The Path to Revenue Cycle Excellence



Every day, healthcare professionals improve lives. As healthcare finance professionals, we may not be able to provide direct patient care to relieve pain and improve health, but we can ensure that the organizations we serve have the resources they need to carry out the mission of improving lives. And key to providing those resources is the cash produced by a high-performing revenue cycle.

Until recently, healthcare finance professionals have lacked the process-improvement tools they need to achieve a high-performing revenue cycle. There have been no generally agreed upon measures of excellence, and no way to compare performance with others. More challenging, there has been no consensus about the successful practices that produce measurably high performance.

A new HFMA initiative called MAP puts reliable performance improvement of the revenue cycle in your grasp.

MAP stands for Measure, Apply, and Perform—the core components of performance improvement.

Measure: MAP provides industry-standard indicators for consistent measurement and reliable comparisons with peers.

Apply: MAP provides demonstrated best practices linked to the performance indicators.

Perform: MAP helps you achieve revenue cycle excellence and recognizes high performance.

Created by and for healthcare leaders, HFMA's MAP will provide industry-driven measures of revenue cycle excellence, tools to apply those measures across the industry, and successful practices that drive high performance. The components of the MAP are:

MAP Keys: Indicators of revenue cycle excellence

MAP App: The essential tool to track performance and recommend improvement

MAP Award: A recognition of high-performing hospitals

MAP Event: A live exchange of demonstrated successful practices

MAP Keys

MAP Keys are indicators of revenue cycle excellence. Developed by industry leaders led by HFMA, MAP Keys define the essentials of revenue cycle performance in clear, unbiased terms and set the standards for the healthcare industry. MAP Keys eliminate the confusion of varying metrics and dubious comparisons. They ensure consistent revenue cycle reporting across institutions and allow peer-to-peer comparisons that make sense.

Using MAP Keys, healthcare finance professionals can improve business intelligence, strengthen revenue cycle management, and decide where to focus for improvement. To date, HFMA has released 19 MAP Keys, and we will produce new ones to reflect the changing industry and the continuing need for standards for revenue cycle excellence. More information is available at www.hfma.org/mapkeys.

MAP App

The next feature of HFMA's MAP is a customized web-based tool to track performance and recommend improvements. This tool is called the MAP App.

The MAP App will track a hospital's performance throughout the revenue cycle and compare that performance with the performance of other

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organizations. You will be able to compare performance against the industry as a whole and against a customized peer group. The MAP App also will offer successful practices and includes a community discussion forum for airing common concerns and sharing ideas and strategies. A pilot of this tool was unveiled at this year's ANI. We plan to roll out the tool for general use within several months. Look for more information at www.hfma.org/mapapp.

MAP Award

Being able to measure revenue cycle performance means that we can recognize high performers. To honor hospitals that achieve revenue cycle excellence, we have created the MAP Award for High Performance in Revenue Cycle. MAP Award winners excel in meeting the benchmarks established in the MAP Keys and PATIENT FRIENDLY BILLING® practices. The MAP Award is sponsored by 3M Health Information Systems.

The award was established in 2009, and the 2010 winners were announced in June at ANI. Their successful practices will be shared in the MAP App, HFMA publications, and live education, including the MAP Event. Additional information about the award and this year's winners is at www.hfma.org/mapaward.

MAP Event

At the MAP Event, high-performing organizations share their cutting-edge strategies. The MAP Event brings together the best ideas in today's healthcare industry for improving revenue cycle performance, strengthening cash position, and ultimately generating the resources to support the mission of care.

This year's MAP Event takes place November 7-9 in San Diego at the Coronado Island Marriott

Resort & Spa. The MAP Award-winning organizations who will present are Baylor Health System, Danbury Hospital, Princeton Baptist Medical Center, Carolinas HealthCare System, Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Touchette Regional Hospital, and Sharp Grossmont.

At the MAP Event, you'll learn these organizations' methods to:

- Identify efficiency improvements to decrease Net Days in A/R
- Reduce denials and ultimately decrease Aged A/R
- Educate consumers on payment expectations to increase POS Cash Collections
- Develop a comprehensive financial counseling process to identify payment sources and reduce Bad Debt
- Improve operational performance and reduce Cost to Collect
- Use technology to increase Front-End Efficiencies, including Insurance Verification and Pre-Authorization
- Simplify charity care policies to ensure consistent application and compliance

And you'll learn how your organization can win a MAP Award next year.

A keynote address by Quint Studer provides you with the motivation and the tools for "Straight-A Leadership: Alignment, Action and Accountability."

Be part of the community of high-performers. To register for the MAP Event, call 800-252-4362, ext. 2, or visit hfma.org/mapevent.

Alabama Chapter Educational Scholarship

The Alabama Chapter of HFMA invites students pursuing a career in healthcare financial management to apply for the \$1,500.00 annual Alabama Chapter Educational Scholarship Award. Nominees for the scholarship are selected from among high school seniors, college students, and graduate students who have at least a 3.0 grade point average and who are currently enrolled in any accredited college or university in a financial field who expect to enter the healthcare financial management industry.

The \$1,500 award is designed to help a member of the Alabama Chapter of HFMA or a child or grandchild of an Alabama Chapter HFMA member in their educational endeavors, and as a Chapter, we are proud to support the educational endeavors of students in the healthcare financial management field. Nominations can be made by any member of the chapter. Nominations should include name, address, and phone number, place of employment, GPA (with transcript for verification), activities/accomplishments, college/school, degree/program pursuing, HFMA member or relationship, and reason for nomination.

The HFMA Alabama Chapter recognizes recipients of the Alabama Chapter Educational Scholarship award at their annual conference in the summer. Nominations are due by April 30th of each year (for the award to be awarded that summer). This is a one-year scholarship, but awardees are encouraged to re-apply for additional awards. Awardees are determined by the Alabama Chapter Scholarship Committee with approval by the Alabama Chapter Board of Directors. All decisions of the Committee and Board are final. Full-time students may join HFMA for \$35. If you are a full-time student and would like to either join the HFMA Alabama Chapter or submit an application for the Alabama Chapter Educational Scholarship, please obtain an application on-line at www.alabamahfma.org.

- Jon Kimsey
Finance Committee & Scholarship Chair



“As physicians, we have so many unknowns coming our way...

One thing I am certain about is my malpractice protection.”

Medicine is feeling the effects of regulatory and legislative changes, increasing risk, and profitability demands—all contributing to uncertainty.

What we do control as physicians:
our choice of a liability partner.

I selected ProAssurance because they stand behind my good medicine. In spite of the maelstrom, I am protected, respected, and heard.

I believe in fair treatment—and I get it.

 **PROASSURANCE.**
Treated Fairly

Professional Liability Insurance & Risk Management Services

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For individual company ratings, visit www.ProAssurance.com • 800.282.6242



Clarke: Economy Uncertain, but Recession Has Silver Lining for Providers So the economy is on the road to recovery—or is it?

**That was the question posed by HFMA President and CEO,
Richard L. Clarke, DHA, FHFMA, at HFMA's 2010 ANI:
The Healthcare Finance Conference.**

Today's economic environment has created an atmosphere of uncertainty for providers, Clarke says. "There are some really big challenges ahead for us," he says.

For example, when it comes to capital access, the recovery does not appear to be in full swing, judging by the results of HFMA Financial Pulse research published in May. Drawing on the Pulse research, Clarke noted that 40 percent of respondents recently experienced challenges related to capital funding, and more than one in five report that debt costs have increased.

Fully 60 percent of respondents said they would increase capital spending in the event of an economic turnaround. However, because of the uncertainty regarding where the economy is headed for the long term, "There could be some worry about that," he says.



Richard L. Clarke, DHA, FHFMA

Even though many hospitals have had to defer capital expenditures and cut operating costs, the recession actually has had a silver lining, Clarke says. "There were some key lessons that were learned (by providers)," he says.

For example, in response to economic challenges, many organizations have also implemented process improvements that support next-generation care delivery. Specifically, more than 80 percent of the financial executives responding to the Pulse survey reported that their organizations have devoted more attention to business performance throughout the enterprise, enhanced collaboration between finance and operations, and increased clinical department leaders' engagement in business performance. "These process improvements and business performance improvements will be important as we move out of the recession and into an era of reform," Clarke says. They are among the strategies needed to succeed in a reform environment, he says.

It's important for providers not to forget the lessons that were learned during the recession. Healthcare reform will add "a layer of uncertainty to the environment that we started with," Clarke says. Attention to the revenue



cycle will continue to be "very, very key." "We can't lose track of the fact that there are ways that organizations can continue to drive their revenue streams that will allow them to fulfill their mission," he says.

Above all, the changes and challenges providers will be faced with as a result of reform require that healthcare organizations be prepared to respond with speed, flexibility, and agility when needed. "No matter how small or how large (the organization), being a nimble organization in this environment is critical," Clarke says.



MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Who We Are:

Lonnie Younger, Huntsville Hospital, Chair
Meggan Elliott, Warren, Averett, Kimbrough & Marino, Co-chair
Chris Allen, Amsher
Annette Baker, Blue Cross/Blue Shield
Ryan Schultz, PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP
Carol Slivka, Huntsville Hospital

NEW MEMBERS: July

Amanda Elmore, Tradeshow Coordinator
The SSI Group, Inc.

Charles B. Freeman, II, CPA, Tax Manager
Deloitte Tax, LLP

Karrie Fayard Nelson, Manager, Business Office

Meredith P. Nelson
LifePoint Hospitals
Sponsor: Shirley M. Smith

Jarod L. Rybacki, Assistant Administrator
Orthopaedic Sports Medicine Clinic of Alabama

NEW MEMBERS: August

Carrie W. Proctor, DRG Analyst
EquiClaim

Ashley A. Dean, Program Coordinator
The Kirklin Clinic MEG Lab

William M. Baker, CPA
Jackson Thornton

NEW MEMBERS: September

Lora J. Cochran
Healthcare Operations
Tenet Healthcare

Charles W. Nall, Clinic Administrator
Grove Hill Healthcare Clinic
Sponsor: Elaine N. Averett

Doug Cason, Team Leader
Financial Systems
Jackson Hospital & Clinic

Lora J. Cochran
Healthcare Operations
Tenet Healthcare

Charles W. Nall, Clinic Administrator
Grove Hill Healthcare Clinic
Sponsor: Elaine N. Averett

Doug Cason, Team Leader
Financial Systems
Jackson Hospital & Clinic



Welcome to all our new members. I would encourage each of you to consider volunteering in the chapter.

\$25 Cash Card
when you recruit a new member

\$50 Cash Card
when you recruit a
Senior Financial Executive

Become CHFP Certified



HFMA's CHFP (Certified Healthcare Financial Professional) certification is intended for mid-level healthcare professionals with a minimum of 3-5 years experience. Becoming certified distinguishes you a leader as well as a role model in the healthcare finance community. Earning the CHFP credential enhances your credibility, supports your professional development, demonstrates a high level of commitment to the field, and validates your skills and knowledge.

The CHFP Certification Program is Online January 2011



We've made the process of certification more convenient. Beginning January 2011 the requirements to becoming CHFP certified are:

- Active regular or advanced HFMA membership*
- The title Manager and above or equivalent
- The successful completion of one comprehensive certification exam

Also new for 2011, CHFP preparation and study materials will now be available online.

To learn more about becoming certified, visit www.hfma.org/certification.

To review FAQs about the program changes, visit www.hfma.org/certificationFAQ.

**The two year HFMA membership requirement has been dropped.*



hfma

healthcare financial management association

Prattville One-Day Recap September 24, 2010

The Prattville One-Day was held at Legends Marriott at Capitol Hill in Prattville, Alabama, September 24, 2010, for those unable to attend you truly missed a great opportunity to hear enlightening speakers and topics.

We had 92 attendees and 6 exhibiting sponsors. The Alabama Chapter continues to excel in providing high quality education to its membership our One-Day was no exception.

We kicked off by recognizing our sponsors and exhibiting vendors for their continued support and participation to our organization.

Joan Ragsdale, CEO of MedManagement, LLC – Provided in-depth discussion on RAC'S and other regulatory agencies expanded scrutiny and the challenge to hospitals and healthcare organizations face in this difficult environment; Carlos Taylor, Finance Director and Nelda Sorrells, Patient Access Director with Prattville Baptist Hospital, shared Patient Access and the Revenue Cycle: What does Patient Access mean to the Facility. Jacqueline Thomas, Director of Program Integrity with Alabama Medicaid discussed "Medicaid Audits and You". JE Avrard, Provider Services of BCBS of Alabama provided BCBS Updates. Marc Grossman, Tax Sr. Manager of Dixon Hughes, LLC discuss with CFO's, VP of Finance, How Hospital can Mitigate their Unclaimed Property Risks, Compliance Risks and Improve their Compliance Posture. Kim Davis Allen, HIT Coordinator with Alabama Medicaid discussion on Alabama's Road to Meaningful Use. Vince Bonetti, Executive Director with Huntsville Hospital and Tim Smith, President of MedPay Assurance provided insight on Merging Law and Medicine to Maximize Recovery our final speaker. Cindy Hooper, RAC Coordinator with Huntsville Hospital review of Recovery Audit Contractors: Preparing for the Future – A Hospital Case Study.

The attendee's surveys revealed that the presentations were very informative and relevant. Many requested copies of speaker presentations to share with others at their facilities.

Special thanks to Sherita Mosley and Donald Payne for the countless hours they volunteered organizing our first One-Day Session in South Alabama. Also to our registration volunteers: Donna Henderson, Samantha Gentry and Heather McClure without the coordination leading up to the event our programs would not be as successful!

I want to say thank you to Jeff Burkhardt and Donna Ellenburg managing our website; Donald Payne and Sherita Mosley coordinating our exhibitors; Tracy McCown, providing PFS speakers; Kim Shrewsbury, providing CFO speakers and Leigh Aufdemorte providing Compliance speakers. Without the support of all volunteers it would be impossible to have high quality speakers and relevant topics to our industry and the success of our Institutes.

I would like to THANK all of our sponsors, exhibitors and members without your continued support it would be difficult to attain our long standing success as a premier chapter. I am honored that you have chosen to attend and actively participate in our chapter. I appreciate your support and involvement!

**- Stephanie Martin
President**

Can we help manage and streamline your business operations?



At Firstsource, that's exactly what we do.

From capital constraints and margin pressures, to administrative and staffing challenges, Firstsource understands the complex demands impacting healthcare providers' business offices. The Premier Partnership Program (P³) offers a total business process outsourcing solution designed to maximize profitability and streamline operations. As a strategic partner, Firstsource provides the scalability and efficiency required to manage all business functions so healthcare providers can focus on what really matters – delivering superior patient care.

To learn more about how we can provide a customized business process outsourcing solution, so you can focus on patients, please call **888-897-0951 or visit www.firstsource.com.**

P³ Benefits Include:

- *Increased capital*
- *Reduced expenditures*
- *Guaranteed cost-savings*
- *Increased commercial flexibility*
- *Additional capacity utilization*
- *Advantageous risk/reward pricing structure based on benchmarking*





Certified Patient Account Representative

Fall 2010-2011 CPAR Certification Exam

CPAR Testing Online is now available!

If you have any questions, please contact Tavie Bender at 205-599-3846 or via email at tavie_bender@chs.net

Register online today!
You must register online.

Fees

Total fee: \$50.00 – Fees must be paid in full at the time of registration.
If a Hospital or other Healthcare Provider will be making payment on behalf of their Employees; during registration process, select pay at the event.

CPAR Exam Policy

To sit for the CPAR Exam, you must attend one (1) coaching session. When registering, you are required to select one (1) coaching location date and time, one (1) test site location date and time. For testing, there may be two options on the same date due to limited seating.

2010-2011 Coaching and Test Schedule

For future coaching and test dates, please visit us on the web at www.alabamahfma.org

Online testing has limited seating by location.



Be A Part... Volunteer for Your Alabama Chapter and Communities



hfma[™] alabama chapter
healthcare financial management association



REGION V VOLUNTEER MONTH



Help The Homeless

February is our annual Volunteer Month, as all five Chapters in Region V will be participating in Feed the Homeless campaign. Generosity can be defined as caring about the needs of others and then acting to meet those needs. Isn't that what our chapter does? I encourage each of you to become a volunteer leader get co-workers, vendors or another member or two make plans to volunteer in a shelter to feed the homeless. The opportunities to "STEP UP" can make a difference to share time by giving to those less fortunate than ourselves. You can help by donating financial contributions, serving in a food line, cook, clean, simply share a smile or conversation can make a special day for someone. The Fall Institute we plan to "KICK OFF" our Feed the Homeless Campaign by accepting food items with other donations to distribute to area shelters throughout Alabama. Our Special Project Committee will provide further details each month along with our progress.

Please contact:

Linda.Maddox@na.firstsource.com or EricaStewart@fcb-hsv.com for further details.

Recently one weekend I was channel surfing and came across a program on the History Channel about Abraham Lincoln. It was a fascinating discussion by Tom Wheeler, the author of *"Mr. Lincoln's T-Mails, How Abraham Lincoln used the telegraph to win the Civil War"*. In the discussion, Mr. Wheeler reviewed the evolution of Abraham Lincoln's discovery and usage of the telegraph in managing his commanders in the American Civil War. In it, Wheeler laid out some powerful correlations that we can use in communication even today:

Hierarchy of Communications - Electronic messages were Lincoln's least preferred means of communicating. First on his hierarchy were direct, in person exchanges. Today, however, the ease of email encourages us to use it as a primary means of communication. Worse still, we use email as a way to avoid personal interaction. Such habits are the exact opposite of Lincoln's behavior. Lincoln sought face-to-face exchanges. Walking among the government agencies to drop in on one person or another, Lincoln could not only deliver a message, but also hear a reply, see the body language, and engage in dialog. Electronic communications became an important part of Lincoln's leadership, but only in situations where distance was too great and mail or messenger too slow. I have become more aware that emails are not a substitute for walking down the hall or picking up the phone.

Words are Important - When he used an electronic message Lincoln maximized its impact by using carefully chosen words. His August 1864 telegram to General Grant, "Hold on with a bull-dog grip, and chew and choke" could not have been more explicitly expressed. Emails, on the other hand, have tended to become the communications equivalent of casual Fridays, substituting comfort and ease for discipline and rigor. The impersonal context of an electronic message, devoid of body language and tone of voice, places an increased burden on the



Jerry Smith

precision of words. As I write emails I am more aware that the manner in which I express myself must not only convey my thoughts, but also the nuances which would otherwise be communicated physically.

Less is More - Whereas many saw the blank telegraph form as an invitation to an essay, Lincoln's telegrams were short and to the point. "Your long dispatch of yesterday just received," Lincoln chided General George McClellan about a 10-page telegram sent in May 1863. Then the president required only three additional sentences to reply to the general's endless essay. Staring at a blank email screen offers a great temptation to lengthy prose that should be avoided at all costs. I have tried to adopt the practice that if a message is important enough to go on for pages, it is probably too important to be expressed in an email.

Message Candor - Honest Abe was frank and direct in his communications. "If you and he would use the same frankness to one another, and to me, that I use to both of you, there would be no difficulty," Lincoln wrote General Joseph Hooker in June 1863 regarding the ongoing feud between Hooker and General-in-Chief Henry Halleck. Because electronic messages are communications without physical context they place new demands on forthright expression. Lincoln learned that a polite "suggestion" which when delivered in person can be recognized as more than a mere suggestion, needs to be more directly conveyed in an electronic message. Reading between the lines of an email is more diffi-

cult than reading facial expressions or voice tones.

Take a Breath - If frankness and candor are a virtue, they also require judicious application in electronic messages. Just because it is possible to instantaneously send a message doesn't mean it is appropriate to do so. Responding to a September 1863 telegram from General Ambrose Burnside, Lincoln wrote in a reply telegram, "it makes me doubt whether I am awake or dreaming. I have been struggling for ten days...to get you to go assist Gen. Rosecrans...and yet you steadily move the other way." After fully venting his frustrations Lincoln turned the page over and wrote, "Not sent." Hitting the "Send" button on an email is an easy, but irreparable, action. I have found that a message quickly composed in frustration has a high probability of becoming a message I would later regret. Lincoln may have been direct and frank in his t-mails, but he also understood that not all messages are appropriate for the electronic medium.

Reading Other People's Mail - Abraham Lincoln's habit was to walk into the War Department telegraph office, open the drawer containing copies of all the telegrams received, and read them all, regardless of to whom they were addressed. Through this procedure Lincoln had a keyhole into the thinking of his generals and activities in the field. The "cc" and "Reply All" function of email provides a similar opportunity for us to stay informed. While many discourage the practice as simply "CYA" it nevertheless is an effective means of sharing information. Lincoln would skim the stack of telegrams and set aside those he wanted to carefully consider; we have the same opportunity to skim and hit the delete button. Excluding spam, of course, the issue is not too many emails, the information they bring can be helpful and if not can be quickly deleted. Lincoln's gift was also what he did with the information. When he saw something in a telegram not addressed to him Lincoln had no hesitation to interject himself, uninvited, into the matter at hand. Lincoln led by reading the electronic inbox and then projecting his leadership at times of his choosing.

The Value of a Hand-Written Note - Lincoln's appreciation of the telegraph was because of its ability to instantaneously communicate over great dis-

tances. Where a face-to-face meeting was not possible he preferred a well thought out letter. In such letters he would cogently lay out his thoughts as well as respond to issues he imagined the recipient would raise. Something handwritten is also more physically and emotionally powerful than an impersonal message over the wires. When for instance, Lincoln congratulated General Grant for his Vicksburg victory in July 1863 his statement, "I now wish to make the personal acknowledgement that you were right, and I was wrong" was made all the more significant by coming direct from the president's hand. I have begun to realize that precisely because email offers an easy way to dash off a message, that certain kinds of messages are actually diminished when sent electronically. The impact of a handwritten note has been increased by the electronic ability to avoid such a note.

- Jerry Smith
Newsletter Chairman



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