

# South Florida Hospital News<sup>™</sup> and HEALTHCARE REPORT

THE REGION'S MONTHLY NEWSPAPER FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS & PHYSICIANS

## HEALTHCARE EDUCATION

### Biomedical Informatics: Critical to Population Health

We are in a golden age of health information technology (HIT), especially in its application to population and public health. Unfortunately many organizations struggle to find employees with adequate experience and qualifications. The explosion of federal funding through the Meaningful Use incentive program has created an environment where we are seeing HIT adoption like never before. Since 2009 the adoption rate of electronic health record systems in physician offices has increased dramatically, to 78 percent in 2013. Since 2010, the number of hospitals who have adopted an electronic health record system has quadrupled, to 59 percent. Fortunately for those with the right qualifications, such as a Master's degree in Biomedical Informatics - demand has outpaced supply.

While meaningful use and electronic health record adoption was the beginning, health care innovation continues to forge ahead at a rapid pace. Recently, there has been even more emphasis on population health and value-based purchasing through the Accountable Care Organization model – meaning that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid are looking through a population health lens, and moving towards paying medical providers based on improved quality of care across entire populations and shared savings through decreased costs, rather than just the volume of services they deliver to a single patient. At the center of this is health information technology. The ability to understand the intersection between healthcare and technology is the key to this expanding need especially where population health is involved. Fortunately this is exactly what students get from the Nova Southeastern University Master's in Biomedical Informatics program.

They not only learn the theories and the concepts at the intersection between healthcare and technology, they get



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practical hands-on experience. Key concepts and skills are taught across a wide variety of subject areas – including understanding public health informatics, database systems, managing organizational behavior, information security, project management and clinical decision support – all without needing previous experience in information technology or the medical field and delivered both online and/or onsite, depending on student preference.

This is an extremely exciting time for population health, healthcare, and informatics and those with a Master's degree in Biomedical Informatics are right in the center of it all. Federal and national innovations in healthcare revolve around health information technology as the glue

that binds them together - meaningful use, accountable care organizations, patient-centered medical homes, electronic health record adoption and implementation, and health information exchange to name a few.

Considering all of the above, the need for these skill sets and deep understanding shows no signs of slowing down, and in fact seems to be only increasing. At a time where 67% of Chief Information Officers (CIOs) are reporting a shortage of HIT staff, 97% of CIOs are reporting open HIT positions, where the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts the HIT market will grow at about 24% per year, and where the average salary for HIT professionals ranges from \$86k to \$189k, the future looks extremely bright for those in this field, and the Nova Southeastern Biomedical Informatics Master's program provides exceptional preparation for them, to the benefit of the health care system as a whole.

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