This paper outlines the categories of Health Information Management training currently available in Germany.

Bachelor Program (Diplom Dokumentar)
This program is designed for persons who have passed the German Abitur, which is equivalent to qualification for university admission. It is a four-year full-time program which includes two half-year terms of practical training. There are two universities of applied sciences in Germany offering this program.

Diploma Program (Medizinischer Dokumentar)
This program is designed for persons who have passed the German Abitur, which is equivalent to qualification for university admission or for persons who passed the secondary modern school and already finalised a professional training program in the health care area; for example, nursing. It is a three-year full-time program which includes several terms of practical training, totalling one year. There are five technical schools offering this program in Germany.

Basic Certificate Program (Medizinischer Dokumentationsassistent)
This program is designed for persons who passed the German secondary modern school (Realschule). It is a two-year full-time program which includes several terms of practical training, totalling six months. There are 16 technical schools offering this program in Germany at the present time.

Additional training programs
In the last two years a new vocational training program was installed by the German government, because all the above-mentioned programs could not fill all offered positions in the field of HIM. It is a three-year program, split into half-time training on the job (for example in university hospitals) and half-time training in vocational schools. It is designed for persons who passed the German Hauptschule.

Because Germany also switched to the DRG system for hospital payment, and because of the lack of enough trained persons in this area, many uncertified programs for DRG-coders came into existence.

Curriculum
The curriculum of the training courses comprises five main topics on different levels:

Informatics
General, Programming I, Programming II, Hospital Information Systems, Database Design, Internet.

Mathematics / Statistics / Clinical Trials

Documentation
Medical Documentation, Patient Files, Coding Systems in Hospitals, Coding Systems for Clinical Trials, Medical Controlling, DRG, Literature Search.

Medicine
Anatomy, Physiology, Medical Terminology, Pathology, Pharmaceutics, Laboratory Standard Units.

Law and Others
English, Personnel Management, Health Economics, Law, Regulatory rules in Clinical Trials, Data Security

It is understandable that after two years’ training in this course, the health information professional’s knowledge will be much more superficial than that gained in a three- or four-year program.

Employment areas
There are two main employment areas for Health Information Managers in Germany.

The Pharmaceutical Industry/Contract Research Organisations
About 48% of the Health Information specialists in Germany are working in this area. They are responsible for the planning and coordination of clinical studies, monitoring, Data Management, Statistics/Biometrics, Drug Safety (Coding/Database), Quality assurance/Quality control, Literature search and handling.

Hospitals
About 29% of the Health Information specialists in Germany are working in this area. They are involved in the field of clinical documentation, coding of diagnosis and procedures, obligation documentation, cancer registration, clinical or epidemiological trials, hospital information systems, medical controlling.

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