

Health Information Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Health Information Manager roles in Australia typically assess your technical coding knowledge, your understanding of privacy and data governance, and your ability to lead a team and communicate with clinicians and administrators. Employers look for evidence that you can balance accuracy, compliance and practical reporting needs.

- **Technical:** Questions on ICD-10-AM andACHI coding, data quality checks, and the use of patient administration systems.
- **Process:** Walk-throughs of how you manage record release, retention schedules, or privacy impact assessments.
- **Behavioural:** Questions asking for past examples of leadership, stakeholder management, or resolving data conflicts.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations such as discovering a privacy breach or receiving an audit finding that requires action.
- **Regulatory:** Questions about your knowledge of the Privacy Act, state health records legislation, and national data standards.

The interview process often starts with a phone screen with HR or a recruitment agency, covering your background and availability. The main interview is usually a panel with the health information manager, a clinical coding manager, and sometimes an IT or clinical representative. You may be given a short technical exercise, such as coding a sample episode or interpreting a data quality report, followed by behavioural and scenario questions.

1. Can you walk me through how you would code a patient episode using ICD-10-AM andACHI? What resources do you use to ensure accuracy?

Why they ask

This tests your core technical skill and your familiarity with Australian coding standards.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step walk-through: start with the clinical documentation, identify the principal diagnosis, apply the Australian Coding Standards, then assign procedure codes usingACHI. Mention resources like the ICD-10-AM tabular list, index, and the National Coding Centre advice.

Example answer

"I start by reviewing the discharge summary and clinical notes to understand the reason for admission. I identify the principal diagnosis by applying the Australian Coding Standards, then look up the code in the ICD-10-AM tabular list and index. For procedures, I useACHI to classify any surgical or diagnostic interventions. To ensure accuracy, I cross-check with the Australian Coding Standards, the National Coding Centre advice, and any local coding guidelines. If documentation is unclear, I query the clinician before finalising the code."

2. How do you manage the release of patient health records when a request comes from a legal firm or insurance company?

Why they ask

This probes your understanding of privacy, consent, and legal processes.

How to structure your answer

A clear process: verify the request, check consent or legal authority, apply privacy principles, prepare the records, and document the release. Mention fees and timeframes.

Example answer

"First, I check that the request is valid and comes from an authorised party, such as a legal firm with the patient's signed consent or a court order. I review the privacy legislation to confirm what can be released and whether any exemptions apply. Then I prepare the records, ensuring only relevant information is included. I apply the scheduled fees for record release and document the transaction in the patient administration system. Finally, I send the records securely and keep a copy of the request and release for audit purposes."

3. Tell me about a time you identified a data quality issue and how you resolved it.

Why they ask

This assesses your analytical skills, attention to detail, and ability to implement improvements.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Focus on the data issue, what you did, and the outcome.

Example answer

"In my previous role, I noticed that our monthly activity reports showed unexplained variations in same-day admissions. I investigated and found that some clinicians were documenting procedures in the wrong section of the electronic medical record. I brought this to the attention of the clinical coding manager and we organised a training session for the clinical staff. I also introduced a weekly data quality check that flagged unusual patterns. As a result, the accuracy of our reporting improved, and the variations were resolved within two months."

4. You discover a potential privacy breach involving patient records. What steps would you take?

Why they ask

This tests your judgement under pressure and your knowledge of privacy incident response.

How to structure your answer

A calm, methodical approach: contain, assess, report, notify, and review. Mention the OAIC and your organisation's privacy officer.

Example answer

"I would immediately contain the breach by securing the records or systems involved. Then I would assess the nature and extent of the breach, including what information was exposed and to whom. I would report it to my organisation's privacy officer and follow our privacy incident response plan, which may involve notifying the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner if it is a serious breach. I would also inform affected patients as required. Finally, I would review the incident to identify what went wrong and implement changes to prevent it from happening again."

5. How do you manage a team of clinical coders to meet deadlines and maintain accuracy?

Why they ask

This assesses your people leadership and ability to balance productivity with quality.

How to structure your answer

A balanced approach: setting clear expectations, providing training, monitoring performance, and supporting wellbeing.

Example answer

"I start by setting clear daily and weekly targets that are realistic and aligned with our reporting deadlines. I hold short daily huddles to check on progress and address any coding queries. I provide regular training on coding updates and audit feedback, and I encourage coders to flag complex cases early. I also monitor individual accuracy through audits, but I focus on coaching rather than blame."

When deadlines are tight, I prioritise cases and may adjust workflows to ensure we meet our obligations without compromising quality."

6. How do you explain complex health data requirements to clinicians or IT staff who are not familiar with coding?

Why they ask

This tests your communication skills and ability to translate technical concepts for different audiences.

How to structure your answer

A communication approach: understand the audience, use plain language, connect to their goals, and check understanding.

Example answer

"I first find out what the clinician or IT staff member needs to achieve, so I can tailor my explanation. I avoid jargon and use examples that relate to their work, such as how accurate coding affects funding for their department or how a data field in the EMR flows into reports. I use simple diagrams or screen shots when helpful. I check that they understand by asking them to explain it back to me, and I offer ongoing support. This approach has helped me build strong working relationships with clinical and IT teams."