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Patient Matching Issues Take Center Stage in Newly Published Research from Just Associates and The College of St. Scholastica

CENTENNIAL, Colo. – April 15, 2016 – Just Associates, Inc., a nationally recognized leader in patient matching and health information data integrity and management, announced today the publication of its research into the impact on duplicate record creation of data discrepancies in key patient identity fields by *Perspectives in Health Information Management*, the online research journal from the AHIMA Foundation. "Why Patient Matching Is a Challenge: Research on Master Patient Index (MPI) Data Discrepancies in Key Identifying Fields," co-authored by informatics and data integrity experts from Just Associates and The College of St. Scholastica, found that the middle name field had the most mismatches at more than 58 percent, followed closely by the Social Security Number field at 53.5 percent.

"This study shines a bright light on the patient identification issues that continue to plague healthcare, impeding progress toward improved care quality and patient safety. It is a significant problem, one that spreads rapidly across organizations whenever dirty data is shared," said Just Associates CEO and President Beth Haenke Just, MBA, RHIA, FAHIMA. "Even with the emergence of best practices, clinical systems remain clogged with duplicate records, shaking providers' confidence in the quality of patient data being shared. This study and others like it are extremely important if we are to fully understand the root causes of duplicates and design solutions that close the gaps in technology, policies, processes and training that exacerbate the issue."

Adds Ryan Sandefer, Chair & Assistant Professor, The College of St. Scholastica Department of Health Informatics and Information Management, "Patient matching is complex problem that healthcare needs to address, which is why the opportunity to partner with Just Associates to analyze data of this variety and volume with the goal of identifying root causes of inaccuracies was extremely beneficial. This research provides a unique opportunity to propel the medical informatics and HIM professions forward, in part through the hands-on experience we can bring back to the classroom to educate future HIM professionals regarding the challenge of working in a complex healthcare environment."

The study examined the underlying causes of duplicate records using a multisite data set of 398,939 patient records with confirmed duplicates and analyzed multiple reasons for data discrepancies between those record matches. Researchers found that the majority of mismatches in the name fields were the result of misspellings (53.1 percent in first name and 33.6 percent in last name) or from reversing names, e.g. last name being entered into the first name field.

According to Megan Munns, RHIA, Just Associates' identity manager and co-author of the data integrity research, the study also demonstrated that sophisticated technology alone is not enough to significantly improve patient matching.

"Human error will never be completely eliminated," she said. "That is where strong data and information governance policies and procedures come into play. They provide front- and back-end staff with guidance to proactively increase matching accuracy and improve data integrity."

About Just Associates, Inc.
A recognized leader in health information data integrity and management, Just Associates, Inc. (www.justassociates.com) is a healthcare data integration consulting firm that delivers superior value to its clients through improved patient matching. Just Associates has the process expertise and systems knowledge to deliver tailored, value-added solutions that improve clients' financial outcomes and business processes, support delivery of quality patient care, and meet the expectations of diverse stakeholders through improved data integrity.

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