



9 Credentialing Tips for Success

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Attaining either the RHDS or CHDS credential is a very ambitious endeavor, but it is well worth the time and effort it takes to obtain it. It sends a clear message that you can provide accurate documentation in today's healthcare world because you understand clinical medicine, anatomy, and diseases and their treatment. It will provide you with tools to be able to identify errors and inconsistencies. And it says to other healthcare professionals that you are skilled and qualified in healthcare documentation and able to advocate for the accuracy of a patient's health record.

In taking many people through a 12-week study prep course, here are some key points I would emphasize if you are preparing for obtaining those coveted credentials.

1. What's required?

Become very familiar with the [Walk Through the Blueprint](#) for the credentials you seek and know exactly what content will be on the exam. Another great read before you begin (and keep referring back to it throughout your preparation time) is the [Credentialing Candidate Guide](#) found on the AHDI website.

2. What's your passion?

Commit that this time you will devote to preparing for taking your exam will be your priority. When someone says to me during our study group, "the rest of my life is on hold," I know they are committed and doing what needs to be done. Let it take over your life, or your kitchen table, or a table in your den. That's ok. It takes continued focus in the same direction for a specific period of time that wins the race to attain those four special letters behind your name.

3. What's your plan?

Decide on how you will study. My personal favorite is to focus by body system. When you are covering urology, study the anatomy and physiology, terminology, diseases, medications, laboratory studies, imaging, etc., all having to do with the urologic system of the body.



4. Choose your tools!

There are three reference materials I recommend.

- a. You should have your own copy of the Book of Style 4e from AHDI. Read it cover to cover and, while doing so, highlight those areas that are “new” to you so they stand out and focus your study time on those. Put all your energy into “what you don’t know.” It is critical that BOS3 becomes “your boss.” Learn it, know it, live it.
- b. Language of Medicine by Chabner. This was the main resource for anatomy and physiology we used in our study groups. Each chapter is by body system, and there are quizzes and fill-ins after each chapter.
- c. Technology for the Medical Transcriptionist by Laura Bryan. A great source for all those computer terms you’ve heard, wondered what they meant, and now is the time you need to know them.

5. The Leaning Tower of 3x5s!

Sometimes getting a little hands-on is the way to do it, even in the “techy” world we live in today. Knowing the medical combining forms, prefixes, and suffixes is huge, not just for the exam but also when you are working in your career as an HDS. Make use of plain old 3x5 index cards to learn those. Put the form on one side and the meaning on the other. Flashcards are also a great way to learn medications and normal-range laboratory values. Generic med on one side and brand names and indications on the other. As you routinely go through them, begin separating them into two piles, the ones you get correct every time and the ones you don’t. Start to just focus on the ones you don’t know and don’t waste time on the things you definitely know. If you are more into using your phone or tablet so you can study on the go, check out the website Quizlet.com. You can create your own flashcards on their site or use someone else’s which they have already created.

6. “The plane’s plan was very plain to me.”

Ah yes, those sound-alikes. This includes medical and nonmedical terms. Know the difference between medical terms such as aphagia and aphasia, cecal and thecal, callous and callus. Know the proper use of nonmedical sound-alikes like discreet and discrete, eminent or imminent, and device or devise. Flashcards or Quizlet can also be put to (too, two??) good use here!

7. Find a study buddy!



Join a study group or create a study group of your own. When you are knee-deep in learning the correct order of blood flow through the heart or the correct name and location of every bone in the human skeleton, knowing someone else is on the same journey is a great source of inspiration and encourages you (and them) to stick with it and keep going.

8. Practice makes perfect!

Before taking the actual credentialing exam, take advantage of doing an online practice exam from AHDI. The minimal cost of it is well worth being able to see and “feel” what the real exam will be like.

9. Flaunt those credentials!

Much of what an HDS does in healthcare takes place behind the scenes. So once you attain your credentials, use them whenever you can! When you sign your name, proudly add those credentials too. It might spark a conversation with someone who doesn't know what they stand for and give you the opportunity to be an advocate for the importance of what you do and the role an HDS plays in healthcare today.