Working as a data analyst in the health care field is exciting for a number of reasons, including the vast amount of data produced and the unique challenges that come with each data set. With each challenge, there’s also an opportunity to engineer process improvements that can save money and maybe even lives.

By and large, data analysts are natural problem solvers. Many analysts enjoy playing the role of the “data detective,” which focuses on uncovering the trends and truths below the surface of numbers, ratios and percentages. Data detectives are able to transform an abstract problem into a tangible business question and offer a scalable solution while working with organizational stakeholders to achieve common goals.

If you don’t already have data detectives working in your hospital, this is the time to add them. You can also provide your data analysts with training and support to take their detective skills to the next level. Here are five benefits your organization can realize by developing your data analysts to their fullest potential.

1. Data integration

A skilled data analyst understands how to shape and integrate various sources of data, enabling organizations to maintain good data quality and achieve stakeholder satisfaction. For example, many data analysts in health care organizations field questions from stakeholders, including physicians, inquiring about the validity and interpretation of their data. Armed with the ability to understand how data flows within the organization and how to integrate that data helps the analyst address the stakeholder concerns in the most accurate and efficient way.
2. Predictive insights
Skilled data analysts develop strong quantitative skills, which enable them to offer predictive insights for stakeholders. For example, they are able to analyze data and predict trends for hospital readmission rates and emergency department utilization. This can help health care organizations save a substantial amount of money and take more assertive action instead of reactive action.

3. Efficiency
When data analysts become data detectives, they begin to leverage superior technical skills, software and other analytical tools in the most efficient manner. This results in faster project completion with scalable deliverables and accelerated performance improvement.

4. Collaboration
Data analysts at the top of their practice constantly network with other analysts and key stakeholders, enabling them to absorb knowledge and harvest the best ideas, practices and outcomes.

5. Action
When in the hands of a well-trained analyst, big data offers a wealth of actionable insights. Data detectives can recognize trends in data that others wouldn’t and present those insights in a clear, actionable form.

Now that you understand the benefits of helping your organization’s data analysts become data detectives, you can look for a program focused on building specific skills. The best programs offer skill development in the following:
- Benchmarking
- Risk adjustment mechanisms and tools
- Basis data measurement and analysis
- Advanced data measurement and analysis
- The importance of variation

By ensuring your analysts are well-trained and primed for tackling and unraveling the mysteries of big data, you can make a significant impact in improving your health care organization’s bottom line and patient relationships.

About the author
Peter Gao is an experienced data scientist who creates scalable solutions for members in his role as senior analyst, advanced analytics and informatics at Vizient. He has been trained in the areas of statistics and econometrics.

As the nation’s largest member-driven health care performance improvement company, Vizient provides network-powered insights in the critical areas of clinical, operational, and supply chain performance and empowers members to deliver exceptional, cost-effective care.

For more information, please contact clinicalanalytics@vizientinc.com.