

A Time to Be Bold

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By Wylecia Wiggs Harris, PhD, CAE, chief executive officer

HIM professionals are well aware of the work involved in matching patients to their unique records. Mismatched records can cost us time, lead to frustration, and cause headaches and dissatisfaction for patients and providers. Most importantly, they can lead to serious patient safety events as well as unnecessary costs.

That's why AHIMA celebrated earlier this summer when Congress passed an amendment to an appropriations bill that would remove language prohibiting the Department of Health and Human Services from spending any federal dollars to promulgate or adopt a national patient identifier. The removal of this language, which has been included in appropriations bills for 20 years, represented a small but significant victory on the road to solving the patient matching problem. It's not the whole answer to the problem, but it's a start.

AHIMA's work in patient matching connects directly to the "trusted information" named in our vision of "A world where trusted information transforms health and healthcare by connecting people, systems, and ideas." But it's not enough to talk about our vision; we need to take bold action to make it happen.

Our strategic plan, which defines the work we will be doing in 2020 and beyond to advance the profession and association, includes a robust thought leadership strategy. That means AHIMA will be leading the way to help the industry solve problems like patient matching.

AHIMA will be bold. But we can't do it alone; we'll need your expertise and your voice.

This month's *Journal* looks at the tricky operational issues HIM professionals face in the workplace. Our cover story, "Close Doesn't Count: Patient Matching in HIEs," examines patient matching in the health information exchange (HIE) context, including best practices for ensuring data integrity for patient identity and understanding the role HIEs play in protecting patient identity.

With the increasing migration of care toward outpatient settings, there is an opportunity for HIM to step in and lead the effort to ensure outpatient services are properly captured, billed, and reported. Keeping revenue integrity in the forefront, Keith Olenik, MA, RHIA, CHP, outlines "Six Strategies to Build Outpatient Coding Accuracy and Quality."

AHIMA honors those who have worked to enrich the HIM field with this year's Triumph Awards. National awards designed to recognize those who have made a difference in the HIM profession, the Triumph Awards honor leaders in the industry and recognize these efforts to build our knowledge base and prepare future leaders of the profession. In this time to be bold, this year's recipients are leading the way forward.

This is a time of great opportunity for AHIMA and the HIM profession. It's a time to ask questions and look for solutions, all with an eye to the future. Read more about AHIMA's 2020-2023 strategic plan in the AHIMA membership community on Engage. Be bold and join us in this work to transform healthcare.

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