

# AHIMA Issues First Grace Award: University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Receives HIM Excellence Award

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Innovative approaches in health information management (HIM) led to the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) being selected as the winner of the first AHIMA Grace Award. The award was presented to UWHC leadership on October 2 before thousands of HIM professionals at AHIMA's 84th annual Convention and Exhibit in Chicago, IL.

Named for AHIMA founder Grace Whiting Myers, the AHIMA Grace Award: In Recognition of Excellence in Health Information Management honors healthcare delivery organizations that demonstrate effective and innovative approaches in using health information to deliver high quality healthcare.

Donna Katen-Bahensky, UWHC's president and CEO, said receiving the award is an true honor for the 7,600-employee organization. "We're proud of the innovative approach we take to health information and are honored to be recognized by AHIMA with this new Grace Award," Katen-Bahensky says. "The ultimate winners here are our patients and medical staff who are assured that their information is secure, accurate, and available when and where they need it."

## About UWHC

The University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) is comprised of the academic healthcare entities of the University of Wisconsin, based in Madison, WI, including UW Medical Foundation, UW Hospital and Clinics, UW School of Medicine and Public Health, American Family Children's Hospital, and UW Carbone Cancer Center.

The HIM department at UWHC is led by HIM director Jane Duckert, MA, RHIA. Duckert manages more than 140 employees, including 52 medical coders. UWHC is licensed for 566 beds, has a 70.7 percent average occupancy rate, and has an average bill hold of \$15.1 million.

## UWHC Early EHR Adopters

UWHC first began their electronic health record (EHR) journey in the 1990s by interfacing labs, radiology, and transcribed documents. In 2008 they took the next step in utilizing health information, adopting the motto "great information, great care" and uploading all documentation from the previous electronic system into a new EHR that spanned inpatient and outpatient areas. By beginning the journey to an EHR early and developing a solid innovative plan for expansion, UWHC was able to become the first academic hospital to attain stage 7 of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society's (HIMSS) EHR Adoption Model-the highest level. The model scores hospitals in the HIMSS Analytics Database on their progress in completing eight stages (0-7), with the goal of reaching stage 7-the pinnacle of an environment where paper charts are no longer used to deliver patient care, according to the HIMSS website.

Today at UWHC, all documentation is captured electronically either through direct data entry, interfacing from ancillary systems, or scanning, including documentation from outside facilities. This provides a totally electronic version of a patient's health record. When UWHC says they are serious about longitudinal care, they back it up by retaining records dating from the start of the hospital in 1924 to the present day. If a provider decides that any of the paper documentation is pertinent to the patient's ongoing care, HIM professionals scan the information into the EHR and then destroy the previous paper record. UWHC moved forward with a complete EHR in 2010 when the creation of new paper records was halted. Today only old paper records that are specially requested are maintained or distributed.

## New Technology Adopted and Embraced

To avoid becoming stagnant, UWHC recently began implementing several innovations that included an automated electronic auditing of 100 percent of all scanned documents to enhance patient identity. Palm vein scanning technology is used to quickly and accurately identify patients at the clinic registration and hospital admission areas who may be uncommunicative or unconscious. This technology is also in place to assist with medical identity fraud and theft. UWHC has also developed, maintained, and educated staff on EHR corrections, providing guidelines to ensure accurate and consistent documentation is achieved.

When looking at the overall EHR established by UWHC, Grace Award judge Gloryanne Bryant, RHIA, CCS, CDIP, CCDS says she was “particularly impressed with the fact that they developed an electronic portal whereby outside referring facilities may fax key patient information, and HIM incorporates it into the EHR and it is available for viewing within two hours.” Bryant went on to explain that this practice was “very positive and assists with the continuum of care.”

UWHC has harnessed the power of their EHR to systemically track patient’s preventive care. This is in the form of a reminder flag that indicates to the provider that a patient is near a due date or overdue for a test or procedure. On the other side, patients are encouraged to use a secure patient portal that allows them to view portions of the EHR, receive test results, schedule appointments, and communicate directly with their physicians. Additionally, this portal allows secure access to insurance, claims, and billing information through a partner health insurance program.

Plans for future improvements include the overall goal of improving patient care, satisfaction, and communication with internal and referring physicians by focusing on health information availability, ensuring seamless care, and working to avoid unnecessary tests. Examples of this focus include:

- Development of a referral process for access to complete medical records prior to the visit
- Health information exchange (HIE) between regional healthcare organizations that moves patient information closer to the point of care
- Centralizing release of information (ROI) processes, including radiology film release
- Broadening patient portal software so consumers can complete questionnaires and electronically sign consent forms prior to appointments

### □ Award Finalists and Honorable Mentions

UWHC was NAMED the Grace Award winner from a field of over 40 applicants. Finalists and honorable mentions for the award include:

#### Finalists:

- Boston Children’s Hospital (Boston, MA)
- Cleveland Clinic Health System (Cleveland, OH)
- Vanderbilt University Medical Center (Nashville, TN)

#### Honorable Mentions:

- Banner Health (Phoenix, AZ)
- BayCare Health System (Clearwater, FL)
- Children’s Hospital Colorado (Aurora, CO)
- Henry Ford Health System (Detroit, MI)
- New York-Presbyterian Hospital (New York, NY)
- Springfield Clinic, LLP (Springfield, IL)
- Truman Medical Centers (Kansas City, MO)

## Education and Privacy, Security Top Priorities

Privacy and security is foremost on the minds of many staff members at UWHC. The HIM department staff is out amongst the hospital staff, serving as privacy and security trainers and ensuring all staff, residents, and physicians understand its importance. UWHC has developed a joint Privacy/Security Breach Investigation team where the HIM and Compliance departments evaluate audits, discuss areas that need more education, and work toward delivering a consistent, clear message to all staff and patients. This dynamic privacy auditing team is based out of the HIM department, but works to educate all staff on the importance of “not snooping” by attending individual department meetings and providing ongoing privacy training.

Another outstanding item that led to UWHC receiving the Grace Award is the organization’s commitment to education. As the healthcare industry and HIM profession progress into the future, a key for a successful transition will be education. UWHC recognizes this and has established a tuition reimbursement program, MBA scholarship fund, and annual bonus for employees who earn credentials maintained by a nationally recognized program. Bryant felt that the “support of continuing education via an executive MBA full scholarship for HIM management was very impressive” and one item in particular that demonstrated the importance of continuing education.

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**Article citation:**

Dooling, Julie A; Wiedemann, Lou Ann. "AHIMA Issues First Grace Award: University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Receives HIM Excellence Award" *Journal of AHIMA* 83, no.11 (November 2012): 26-27.

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