

Advancing Quality Care in 2008

Save to myBoK

by Wendy Mangin, MS, RHIA

Several speakers at AHIMA's 79th Convention and Exhibit this past October gave me cause to reflect on the HIM professional's role in the year ahead. Robert Kolodner, MD, head of the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, asked the audience to "think about the fact that you each have a role in your organization, a certain hat you wear." He asked attendees to take that hat off and remember that each of us is also a recipient of care.

"Think: what's the quality of care you want for yourself and your family?" he asked. "What's the quality and value of healthcare service you demand? Make it personal." He then asked the audience to put their HIM hats back on and consider "how do you advance the healthcare agenda so we can give the best quality care?"

Advancing the Healthcare Agenda

There are a number of ways HIM professionals can advance the healthcare agenda. Those of us who are privacy officers can work to break down barriers to implementing electronic health records (EHRs) and exchanging health information electronically within our states.

We can support stronger federal law that includes preemption of state law to ensure uniformity across states. Preemption of HIPAA by state law can lead to interpretation, and interpretation can cause roadblocks to the timely release of patient information.

We must be more vigilant in our educational outreach to healthcare consumers on confidentiality, security, and health IT. Polls consistently show that consumers fear their health information may be used against them. Eliminating this fear of discrimination is crucial to creating a meaningful level of trust in our system and moving forward into the electronic health information environment.

At a press conference during convention, AHIMA announced an expanded public awareness campaign to promote personal health records (PHRs). "It's HI Time, America!" will promote four components essential to a comprehensive, personally maintained health record: high technology, high quality, high security, and high standards.

The campaign calls on HIM professionals to educate consumers on PHRs and encourage them to begin their own. Each time we educate consumers about their role in the creation, maintenance, and use of their personal health information, we create a more informed and involved healthcare consumer base.

Broadening Our Impact

We can help advance the healthcare agenda by increasing our trained work force to assist with the implementation of EHR systems. HIM professionals understand workflow processes, privacy and security concerns, and the value of defining the legal EHR. We can make important contributions in our workplaces by getting that seat at the table and contributing our expertise in these important endeavors.

During the coming year we will also be discussing the "[Vision 2016: A Blueprint for Quality Education in Health Information Management](#)" white paper. [...]. I encourage all members to read and discuss it at your local, regional, and state meetings. Like Vision 2006, we must always be looking toward the future and how we, as HIM professionals, can make our mark.

I look forward to working with you, the House of Delegates, and the Board of Directors during the year ahead. There has never been a more important time to be an active and engaged AHIMA member.

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Article citation:

Mangin, Wendy L. "Advancing Quality Care in 2008" *Journal of AHIMA* 79, no.1 (January 2008): 8.

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