

# Advancing the Globalization of HIM

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by *Melanie Brodnik, PhD, RHIA*

One of the strategic initiatives set by the AHIMA Board of Directors for 2004 focuses on HIM outreach; that is, engaging in activities designed to increase consumer and industry awareness of HIM professionals and practices at home and abroad. My message this month focuses on the “abroad” component of these activities. We recognize that the rapid growth of information and communication technology has truly made the world a “global village,” and the need to advance HIM practice from a global perspective has never been more apparent than it is today.

## A Global Challenge

The threatened inappropriate release of patient information by an offshore, third-party contractor last fall reinforces just how important it is for AHIMA and its counterparts throughout the world to further the globalization of HIM. It is now common to find foreign staff reviewing the “private medical and financial records of US consumers to help determine if they are good risks for insurance policies, mortgages, or credit cards.”<sup>1</sup> Offshoring of HIM-related business activities, along with enhanced efforts to implement electronic medical records both at home and abroad, open tremendous opportunities for HIM professionals in the oversight and implementation of such activities.

In the new world of globalization, knowledge, and information, workers will need skills in analysis, marketing, creativity, innovation, and management. We are fortunate in this profession that today HIM students learn many such skills at various levels of intensity. However, recognizing the need to enhance these skills in an increasingly information-dependent world is a challenge for our academic programs as well as for one’s own professional self-development.

## Looking beyond Our Borders

A major focus of this year’s outreach goal is the 76th National Convention and Exhibit, which the Association is hosting in conjunction with the 14th Congress of the International Federation of Health Records Organizations (IFHRO) in Washington, DC, October 9–14. My first exposure to IFHRO was in 1976 when the Canadian Health Record Association and AMRA (now AHIMA) held a combined congress and convention in Toronto. I can still remember the excitement of attending this convention and meeting individuals from countries that shared very common issues and concerns related to medical record practice.

This experience was repeated in 1988 when AMRA hosted IFHRO in Dallas. AHIMA and IFHRO have shared an excellent relationship over the years. Currently, Jean Clark, RHIA, past AHIMA president, is IFHRO’s president-elect. In addition, 220 AHIMA members currently practice abroad in 39 different countries, underscoring our need to look beyond our borders. The theme for this year’s combined convention and congress is “Sharing Solutions in the Global Economy.” The call for papers resulted in 275 abstracts from 25 countries. The meeting agenda will offer more than 50 stellar educational sessions, an educational poster showcase, special events like the international coding day, tutorials, workshops, field trips, an exhibit hall featuring more than 200 vendors, and more. I invite you to attend this global event. Register online at [www.ahima.org](http://www.ahima.org).

## Note

1. Kripalani, M., and P. Engardio. “The Rise of India.” *Business Week* (December 8, 2003): 66–78.

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