

Are We Walking the Walk?: Measurements, Scorecards, and Milestones: Part 1

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by Mervat Abdelhak, PhD, RHIA

It's mid-year already and time for us to stop just a moment and review what we have accomplished. It is time for us to assess our progress toward the goals we set for 2005 and confirm that we are positioning our association to continue its legacy of success. It is also time to recognize AHIMA staff, volunteer groups, component state associations, and you, the members, for executing and implementing our shared vision. Let's celebrate our milestones.

Our 2005 strategic issues focus on four major initiatives: e-HIMTM, education and certification, outreach, and success by association. While we routinely assess our performance by examining measures such as finances, membership numbers, or meeting attendance, this and next month's column will focus on significant program achievements to date.

Following is a review of three initiatives that address our e-HIM and outreach goals for 2005.

Certification Commission for Health Information Technology. The private collaborative initiative (cofounded by AHIMA, the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society, and the National Alliance for Health Information Technology) has completed the first phase of its work groups' interim products on functionality, interoperability, security, and reliability and the process to be used in certifying electronic health record (EHR) products in physician offices and ambulatory care settings. Through participation in the work groups, AHIMA members and staff are influencing the development of standards and policies. We are leading the national effort to create a credible process for certifying EHR products as a way to accelerate the adoption of health IT initiatives.

Health Information Technology and Health Care Anti-fraud Program Support Services. AHIMA's Foundation of Research and Education (FORE) has been awarded a contract for nearly half a million dollars by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology to study how automated coding software and a nationwide interoperable health information technology infrastructure can enhance and expand healthcare anti-fraud activities. It is, indeed, a milestone for the federal government to select FORE and AHIMA to help define the guiding principles for infrastructure development and implementation to maximize efforts to detect healthcare fraud.

This contract will contribute to improvements in our industry and will bring recognition to AHIMA and its members, creating work force opportunities and research and alliance opportunities.

Mappings from SNOMED CT to HIPAA Code Sets. The National Library of Medicine awarded a procurement contract to AHIMA to build mappings from SNOMED CT to HIPAA code sets, a necessary step in advancing the national health IT agenda. This contract positions AHIMA as the leader in the effort to adopt advanced classification and vocabularies. It will also arm AHIMA with the needed research data so that we can continue to provide leadership and the supportive rationale for the transition to ICD-10-CM.

Our consistent focus on these imperatives, backed by strong execution by our staff, volunteer groups, and members, is key to excellent long-term performance. This is a great time for our association and profession. It is our time! And remember, every member counts!

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