

Better Healthcare through Standards: HIM Involvement Can Help Advance the Industry

Save to myBoK

by Bryon Pickard, MBA, RHIA

This past fall, while flying back to Nashville from the AHIMA annual convention in Denver, I looked out over the jet wing and caught a brief glimpse of a smaller airplane heading due west. The smaller aircraft was at a much lower altitude and clearly at a safe distance. Each time I travel I am reminded how thankful I am the airline industry enforces strict air traffic control systems and has well-defined standards in place. Because of these accepted standards, air travel is one of the safest modes of transportation.

How's the Healthcare Industry Doing?

We all have read the headlines and reports from the Institute of Medicine, stating that tens of thousands of people die unnecessarily each year in hospitals across the United States because of medical errors, many of which are deemed preventable. We also hear the complaints that the cost of healthcare is spiraling out of control and is possibly one of the most critical issues we face today as a nation.

In 2007 the US will once again spend more on healthcare than any other industrialized nation in the world. At the same time there are widespread concerns that the complexity and fragmentation of today's healthcare system creates barriers to access and poses safety risks to citizens. This certainly justifies the question "What is our investment buying us?"

Can we really afford safe, quality, affordable healthcare? Absolutely. However, if we are going to be successful in implementing a much-needed infrastructure and national health information network to make this happen, national standards will be essential. Healthcare providers and the public alike must have access to connected health information to make the best decisions possible.

A Unique Opportunity

What is our role as HIM professionals in leading and enabling this change? Electronic health records and health IT offer a tremendous opportunity for those invested in the HIM profession. Policy makers are seeking details and asking tough questions centering on issues we know something about, including privacy and data security, quality and safety improvements, and reducing medical errors with electronic records. State legislators are also interested in regional health information exchanges as a means to promote information sharing among providers, improving quality, and lowering cost.

Be Proactive

If you are like me, the start of a new year is an excellent time for taking stock, defining goals, and planning what you want to accomplish in the coming year. Do you ever wonder how some people achieve success? Establishing a plan and making a commitment to invest in your own professional development can be one of the most career-enhancing moves you can make.

One of the best ways to differentiate ourselves and ensure we have the necessary skills to be most successful is to take time to invest in our own development. A good launching point to gain the most out of your AHIMA membership is available on the AHIMA Web site at www.ahima.org/membership/orientation.asp.

I encourage you to take charge of your career and look for ways you can contribute-don't wait another minute.

Have a great year, and thank you for the opportunity to serve as your president.

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