

Big Audacious Goal for Consumers

Save to myBoK

By Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, FACHE, CAE, FAHIMA, chief executive officer

Sometimes progress starts with a single step. Last summer, the AHIMA staff participated in an intra-company walking challenge. Volunteer participants signed up to wear a pedometer and track how many steps they took. We tracked our totals weekly, and watched the steps and miles stack up. After two months, participants had walked a cumulative total of more than 15 million steps—approximately more than 13,000 miles.

It was great fun to track our steps for a summer (and a good excuse for exercise). Today many consumers are monitoring steps walked, calories consumed, heart rate, quality of sleep, and much more using a variety of personal gadgets. Even *Vanity Fair*'s James Wolcott got in on the act earlier this year, hooking up to a FitBit and several other fitness-measuring devices. "Keeping tabs on oneself is rooted in the basic human curiosity to check under the hood and, if need be, tinker; self-tracking as the gateway to self-hacking," Wolcott writes.¹

In Search of Health Intelligence

"Self-tracking" may be the latest craze, but it is indicative of a change in the mindset of consumers, too. Healthcare consumers are looking for value. They have more choices in healthcare than ever before, and they have more data to make decisions with, including statistics on patient safety and satisfaction.

AHIMA's 2014-2016 Strategic Plan, released this spring, reflects this evolution. It envisions a future where health information is available where and when it's needed: "HIM professionals will empower all consumers to securely transport their health information with them, no matter where they may travel in the world, providing timely access to any healthcare provider when needed... Consumers will be empowered to access, carry, and update their health information without existing barriers such as geography or competencies."

HIM professionals' goal is to generate health intelligence that patients can use to improve their health. We want to drive the power of knowledge for the patient's benefit—for quality care and to empower patients to make good lifestyle decisions for their health.

Showing the Progress

This month's *Journal of AHIMA* includes several articles that show the progress that's being made toward accomplishing this goal. In "[Personal Check](#)," Lisa Eramo examines how portals and the EHR have changed the method and frequency with which patients can amend their records for accuracy. In "[Declassifying Doctors' Notes](#)," Mark Crawford reports on a study conducted to see if patient access to information improved care. And for some real-world perspective, Leah Grebner and her co-authors offer "[How Can I Help You](#)," a guide to consumer-facing HIM best practices, and Glenn Mitchell discusses how to leverage the overlaps between ICD-10 conversion and other health IT projects in "[First Steps for Synergizing Health IT Projects](#)."

Last month I wrote about the privacy-related balancing act that HIM professionals often perform, walking a tightrope between making sure health information is private and secure and ensuring that the information is available.

We walk a fine line, but we do make progress... one step at a time.

Note

1. Wolcott, James. "Wired Up! Ready to Go!" *Vanity Fair* (February 2013).
<http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2013/02/quantified-self-hive-mind-weight-watchers>.

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Driving the Power of Knowledge

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