

# Brailer to HIM: Continue 'Larger, Louder, and Faster'

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“Do what you are doing larger, louder, and faster,” David Brailer, PhD, MD, told attendees during his general session presentation. Brailer, who served as national coordinator for health information technology in the Department of Health and Human Services from 2004 to 2006, thanked the audience for AHIMA’s “very good work in health information exchange and preventing fraud.” He added, “Now that I’ve left the role, I can really talk to you.”

## Remarkable Progress...but the Work Goes on

Brailer, who has returned to the private sector after resigning earlier this year, noted that the work of implementing health IT nationally is shifting back to the private sector as well. Government will continue to set the tone, he said, but the private sector is “the place where debate will happen.” The industry is moving in the right direction so far, but the work is far from finished, he emphasized. One of his biggest worries, he said, is whether health IT efforts will serve the needs of patients and consumers.

Addressing HIM professionals, Brailer said, “I can’t think of another group better poised to deal with the issues,” and that current progress in technology, from security to networks to speech recognition to certification of health IT, “is a significant achievement.” All of these factors have brought HIM to a “flexion point” that could go in many directions.

## HIM in the Vanguard

The industry is in a similar state of flux. Health IT efforts by themselves are insufficient to deal with many important issues, Brailer noted. For instance, he asked: Do clinicians have the information they need? Is it accurate, timely, and protected? Is it used appropriately to advance care? Does it really document what happened? No technology can guarantee that these questions are addressed, Brailer said, and HIM leadership is needed. “I have come to ask you to continue what you’ve done. I see you as the vanguard to ensure our progress is not limited—that benefits accrue to patients.”

To do this, Brailer said, HIM should concentrate on ensuring that:

- **Health information makes healthcare safer.** If information is incomplete, inaccurate, or not timely, errors can be introduced into care. Despite technology, Brailer said, there is still a need for professionals who understand how valid information comes together.
- **Health information addresses affordability.** The industry should not only look at return on investment, but at what kind of value patients get for the national investment in healthcare in the US. Preventing fraud is part of this, but there is also a need to understand the moral and ethical obligations of the healthcare system. In addition, the newest challenge is to allow health information to help consumers compare prices so they can truly understand what healthcare costs.
- **Health information is portable**-by design and by purpose, Brailer said. Health information exchange and personal health records are part of this process.
- **Health information is protected.** The industry should follow standards beyond the existing laws to move information quickly but protect it, Brailer said.

Finally, Brailer noted that as health IT grows and as health information grows in value, it becomes part of the tools of modern healthcare. “Don’t let it become weaponized” or used for the wrong reasons, he warned. In the end, he stressed, health information should serve consumers’ needs.

Brailer urged the AHIMA audience to continue its focus on these and other important issues and to continue to lead progress. “You can do this,” he said. “There’s no professional body that can deal with these issues with the same passion, neutrality, and effectiveness.”

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