Breaking Down Walls to Realize Our Vision

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By Cassi Birnbaum, MS, RHIA, CPHQ, FAHIMA

As we wind down the year, I can rest assured that our members have successfully arisen to the occasion of the new challenges that confront us, from ICD-10-CM/PCS to conquering data quality challenges with sound information governance (IG) practices.

One of the many highlights of my year as AHIMA's president was taking our consumer engagement vision global, to energize HIM and informatics professionals to take a leadership role in enabling consumers to become active participants in managing their healthcare as we take on new or expanded roles as consumer advocates. Instead of using privacy laws as a barrier to access, we can instead make a difference in providing our patients with secure and compliant patient portal access options, and use Open Notes to increase trust and transparency in the care process. Managing and ensuring the integrity and interoperability of patient-generated data from the home setting to an integrated delivery system is an integral part of the patient experience, and requires innovative strategies and approaches to lessen disruption and improve the care experience through innovative best practices.

This year, we led the healthcare industry to a robust, modern, relevant, and specific code set that will enable our healthcare ecosystem to thrive and grow. The ICD-10 classification system codifies the language of medicine, and without it we limit our ability to improve the health of both the global and local community. We are also showing the healthcare industry the way toward obtaining more reliable information where and when it is needed through the development and implementation of IG initiatives. Effective IG will help drive the use of information to support clinical, financial, and operational decision making in order to transform healthcare with accurate and timely information. And continuing to develop the role of health informatics in healthcare will enable us to drive out the very practices that rob the health record of its value.

Never before has there been a year when I have seen such unprecedented movement in our HIM ranks. Many of us have taken huge leaps of faith and have switched from comfortable positions into new, unfamiliar roles that enable us to support new career pathways in health informatics, analytics, information governance, patient experience, clinical documentation improvement, population health, and patient portals. Prepare for your journey by discussing, planning, and developing your career roadmap with your mentor. Don't wait until you are unhappy to begin this step, but instead actively work to remediate gaps in your education, skills, and knowledge. Don't be afraid to take risks—and learn from your mistakes. We have put in a lot of work paving the HIM superhighway, but now it's time for AHIMA members to jump into the driver's seat, leading initiatives that promote IG and health informatics in their organizations and communities.

We have some amazing initiatives planned for 2016 as we raise the strategic bar even higher and continue to break down information silos, digital divides, quality chasms, and organizational inertia, working to transform disparate data health intelligence as an engaged HIM community. Thank you for the honor and privilege of allowing me to serve you along with our incredible Board of Directors during this historic year in AHIMA's history.

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