Celebration, Engagement, and Impact: HIM in 2006

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by Linda Kloss, RHIA, CAE, chief executive officer

This month AHIMA's 78th Convention and Exhibit will address a wide range of HIM issues. In my career, I have attended more than 30 AHIMA conventions, and I am always struck by the growing breadth of HIM practice issues.

It was a privilege to reflect on the accomplishments of the past decade in "Vision 2006: 10 Years of Advancing Professional Success, Lessons for the Decade to Come." As members know, in 1996 AHIMA initiated Vision 2006, a series of initiatives to ensure that the HIM field was prepared to flourish in a rapidly changing health information environment. The article explores what we have accomplished and the likely trajectory of the decade ahead.

e-HIM in Action

In "The HIM Impact on EHRs" Susan Fenton, Margret Amatayakul, and Mitch Work report on original research funded by AHIMA's Foundation of Research and Education. The research shows the overall level of involvement HIM professionals play in hospital EHR implementations and the variety of roles they serve. Most importantly, it demonstrates that best outcomes in EHR implementations were significantly related to HIM participation, particularly in the areas of workflow, process improvement, and document management.

This study confirms the benefits that HIM professionals bring to EHR implementations. It also points to areas where HIM professionals have the opportunity for greater impact.

Mark Hagland interviews Dr. Mark Leavitt, chairman of the Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT) in "What's Next for EHR Product Certification?" CCHIT announced the first certified ambulatory EHRs in July, a landmark step in the US drive to increase EHR adoption. The certification criteria establish the bar for system functionality—a bar that will be systematically ratcheted up as criteria are added and refined over time.

AHIMA is proud of its founding role in CCHIT. Now it's up to HIM professionals to learn the criteria, help their organizations select systems and get the most out of them, and stay involved in CCHIT and the certification process.

Legal Developments Ahead

Two new federal programs take effect this winter that will have a significant impact on HIM. In "E-Discovery and HIM," Kim Baldwin-Stried outlines the new e-discovery amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which take effect December 1, 2006. E-discovery is an integral function of e-HIM®, and Baldwin-Stried explains how HIM roles and responsibilities will evolve through its increasing use.

In "Ready for the Deficit Reduction Act?" Frank Sheeder explores the laws and practices that states are required to adopt to curb Medicaid fraud. The federal government is offering incentives to states that enact programs by January 1, 2007. States are to model the federal False Claims Act, but to date only 15 states and the District of Columbia have such laws in place. Sheeder recommends that providers get their own compliance houses in order as they can expect "more whistleblower cases at the state level and more cases brought by the states themselves."

When Vision 2006 scenarios for emerging HIM roles were developed a decade ago, there was no HIPAA and few understood the concept of a nationwide health information network. The velocity of change is reflected in the many concepts so familiar to HIM today, such as e-HIM, e-discovery, compliance, certification, record locator services, consumer-driven healthcare, and many others. I look forward to this year's convention as we look ahead and imagine the great future of the HIM field!

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