

# Collaboration Necessary for Furthering Standards Work

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Collaboration is what we're all supposed to be doing these days. But sometimes it's easier said than done. It can be easy, for instance, to collaborate with those in your department, with your fellow birds of a feather. But it can be more difficult to collaborate across departmental boundaries, with those who have different processes, skill sets, and goals.

There are many successful examples of collaboration, however, and AHIMA was proud to unveil one with the publication of "Health IT Standards for Health Information Management Practices" this fall (available at <http://qrs.ly/lb4vec0>). The paper, developed with Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise, outlines an approach for cross-collaboration between HIM professionals, standards developers, and health information technology (health IT) vendors to better align HIM practices and capabilities of health information systems through standards.

A task force of HIM professionals, as well as the AHIMA Standards Team, developed the paper as part of our information governance initiative. It's also the first time HIM professionals and health IT vendors have worked together to ensure that interoperability will be addressed from an HIM perspective. The white paper also includes use cases and best practices, an initial gap analysis of existing health IT standards, and recommendations for the HIM and standards development communities for further standardization. More collaboration is expected in the future.

As electronic health records (EHRs) proliferate, the question of interoperability becomes a recurring refrain. How can we make it easier for providers to use information to improve treatment and outcomes? AHIMA has been working on these questions for several years, focusing on four components of interoperability: functional, technical, semantic, and workforce development. We have also been leading international standards development activities by administering the secretariat for the ISO Technical Committee (TC) 215 Health Informatics and US Technical Advisory Group for ISO/TC 215, as well as working with other international organizations. The goal is to foster standards that are consistent with the needs of HIM practice.

The articles in this issue provide a look at the current progress being made via standards to achieve interoperability. In "[Reformatting Healthcare through Standards](#)," Mary Butler examines how current and future standards could impact HIM, including why they are needed and how they could change HIM processes. The article also gives an overview of the current work of the AHIMA Standards Team in developing a standards framework. Steve Bonney explains the significance of the Consolidated Clinical Document Architecture (C-CDA) standard and offers four ways it can be used in healthcare to advance interoperability in "[Four Applications of C-CDA to Consider](#)." Genomic data is becoming increasingly important in this era of precision medicine. Daniel DuBravec explores the challenges involved in integrating that data into EHRs in "[Can EHRs Handle Genomics Data?](#)" And finally, Diane Dolezel provides practical directions in "[How to Use Relational Databases](#)."

To continue today's standards development work, we will need HIM professionals to get more involved, creating a feedback loop with vendors to ensure they are developing products that meet our needs. Educating yourself on issues like these is a good place to start.

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