

Delegates Debate Issues of Lifelong Learning, Certification

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Lifelong learning and AHIMA certifications were at the top of the minds of members of AHIMA's House of Delegates at the AHIMA convention.

Delegates voted on two action items, considered industry hot topics during issue forums, and honored recipients of this year's Triumph Awards.

Extending the RHIT Progression Window: CoC Proviso Defeated

The House voted down a motion to extend a proviso approved by the 1998 House of Delegates. The initial proviso created a "window of opportunity" that allowed holders of the RHIT credential who were certified on or before December 31, 1999, and who had a baccalaureate degree in any subject to sit for the RHIA exam. The window of opportunity expires December 31, 2004.

The motion would have extended the proviso to say that individuals credentialed as RHITs by December 31, 2005, who also held a baccalaureate degree would be eligible to take the RHIA exam through December 31, 2007.

The motion was defeated by a vote of 128 to 81. It had been submitted by the Council on Certification, which had been asked by the Board of Directors to examine the issue.

The council provided data to the delegates based on research conducted in 2003 with both educators and members who applied to take the RHIA exam through the proviso. The issue was the focus of "lively, healthy, and passionate discussion" among delegates on Sunday, according to delegate work group chair Michelle Wills, RHIA. Prior to the meeting, the topic also was discussed online in the State Leaders and HOD Community of Practice at www.ahima.org.

Embracing Lifelong Learning: A Resolution

The House also approved a resolution intended to raise awareness and promote lifelong learning to AHIMA members. The resolution, "Embracing Lifelong Learning: The Guiding Principles for Professional Development," updated a previous resolution from an earlier House.

"It really is important to make a statement about who we are and what we do, and a resolution is a way to do that," said AHIMA president Melanie Brodnik, PhD, RHIA, during the meeting. The 2004 resolution is intended to affirm AHIMA members' commitment to lifelong learning and to encourage them to develop a professional development plan that would help them prepare for the e-HIM future (see "Text of the Lifelong Learning Resolution (2004 Convention Wrap-Up)" *Journal of AHIMA* 75, no.1 (January 2004): 64.)

A Forum for Issues

During the issue forums, delegates held group discussions on four other issues:

- Volunteer leadership development
- National initiatives: HHS framework for strategic action, e-HIM, SNOMED, and ICD-10
- Consumer education
- Environmental scanning

Each group produced a summary of feedback about the issues. The summaries will be available online in the State Leaders and HOD Community of Practice.

A Year of Action

The meeting also included a report on the state of the association from executive vice president/CEO Linda Kloss, RHIA, CAE. Kloss reported that with one quarter remaining in this fiscal year, AHIMA is on track to meet or exceed its program and business goals. She noted that the past year has been “a time of growth, influence, and action” and that it had been filled with unexpected opportunities. These opportunities include several industry projects in which AHIMA has recently taken a leadership role, such as:

- AHIMA is a founding sponsor of the Certification Commission for Health Information Technology (CCHIT), a group formed by three leading healthcare organizations to create a way to certify ambulatory electronic health records.
- AHIMA has become a contractor with the National Library of Medicine to contribute to the development of mappings from SNOMED CT to ICD and advise on use cases for vocabulary tools.
- AHIMA will co-host (with the American Association of Medical Transcription) an industry meeting to gain a better understanding of the impact of technology on medical transcription.
- AHIMA held a special briefing for corporate affiliates in September. The briefing covered the latest in national health IT initiatives.

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