

Educating the Public about Personal Health Records

Save to myBoK

by Jill Burrington-Brown, MS, RHIA, and Beth Friedman, RHIT

AHIMA's Community Education Campaign for personal health records (PHRs) is in full swing, and the response among AHIMA members has been enthusiastic. Demand for the campaign's training programs has been so high that several states have waiting lists of those who want to be trained.

There are two ways for AHIMA members to volunteer with the Community Education Campaign. They can serve as community education coordinators or community presenters. To become a coordinator, members must attend a full-day training session conducted by AHIMA. Each component state association (CSA) typically assigns one to three representatives to become coordinators. The most recent training was held July 21 in Chicago. As of this training session, there are 59 coordinators in 37 states. Community education coordinator responsibilities include statewide tracking of campaign results, conducting community presentations, and recruiting and training other AHIMA members to be community presenters.

Community presenters are trained by coordinators to give the AHIMA-created presentation within their communities. The training is typically three to four hours long and conducted at the state and regional levels. Community presenter training sessions will be held at the annual convention this month. So far, more than 200 community presenters have been trained. The community presentation includes a fully scripted PowerPoint presentation, a brief video, and handout materials. AHIMA provides all materials to each presenter prior to his or her community presentation. The materials were professionally produced and are of the utmost quality. Coordinators and presenters also share ideas and access additional resources on the Community Education Campaign Community of Practice.

Helping Others

Most AHIMA members pursued a career in HIM as a way to help others. It is a good choice for those who want a profession in healthcare without hands-on patient care. Unfortunately, most HIM positions offer very little interaction with patients, and the goal to help others is seldom achieved firsthand. By volunteering with the Community Education Campaign, HIM professionals can work with the general public one on one or in small groups. It's a great opportunity for HIM professionals to help people while spreading the word about personal health records, members find.

Three coordinators in the training—Julie Wolter, MA, RHIA; Don Kellogg, MS, RHIA; and Chrisann Lemery, MS, RHIA—took time to respond to some questions about the program.

How did you become interested in the program?

Wolter: One of my areas of ongoing research and scholarship in education has been the PHR, so when I saw the presentation at the 2004 House of Delegates [meeting], I knew from that moment I wanted to be the community education coordinator for Missouri. It is a great program and easy to present.

Kellogg: I was asked by the Kansas HIMA board to be the coordinator. Once involved, I found that this topic, which previously I had not given much thought, was extremely relevant and important.

Lemery: I became interested in this program because my parent was seeing many physicians, and a PHR assists in communicating with a physician since physicians don't always have the knowledge of what's occurred with another physician. I learned about the presentation when the HIPAA Collaborative of Wisconsin was interested in educating consumers about their rights under HIPAA, and I contacted AHIMA after seeing a posting to a Community of Practice stating that AHIMA was rolling out a consumer program on the PHR. We have a great opportunity to be educators of consumers on the PHR and their rights. I've always wanted an opportunity to share our knowledge and profession with others.

What do you think of the presentation materials?

Wolter: There is great information presented in a concise manner. It is easy for consumers to follow. We hope they walk away anxious to start their own PHR.

Kellogg: I was very impressed with the time, effort, and expertise that went into the development and testing of the materials. I was in the first group to be trained, and I noticed the final version of the manual and the PowerPoint [presentation] had been changed to incorporate our group's suggestions.

Lemery: I was part of an earlier focus group, and the members of the group provided positive feedback that resulted in a presentation that gives consumers straightforward information on the value of a PHR and how to create a PHR, as well as their rights regarding their records.

Have you given this presentation to groups in your city or state?

Wolter: The community presenters in Missouri have given six presentations. They started by presenting to their coworkers, and now other groups have been educated. They include a family reunion, HIM departments, business office departments, students from a local community college, and a few regional HIM associations.

Kellogg: I have given this presentation to about 35 HIM professionals from various rural hospitals all over Kansas. The exciting thing is that these people live in small rural communities where as community presenters, they can potentially have more of an impact getting the message out to a larger cross-section of the town.

Lemery: My actual presenting of the program has been limited. I've been more involved in getting the community educators trained in June and [developing] ideas for getting the word out about the presentation.

What was the response?

Wolter: Consumers like the concept. In fact, one consumer started filling out her PHR before she even left.

Kellogg: The community presenters' response was very good. By the end of the training, they were having a great time as they practiced their presentation skills and listened to others on the hot seat.

Do you have any further plans to present this information?

Wolter: We currently plan presentations to HIM students, the hospital auxiliary, the chamber of commerce, a motorcycle group, and a display presentation for local health fairs.

Kellogg: I will be making another presentation at our state association's fall workshop in September that will have professionals from all parts of the state. It should be a lot of fun!

Lemery: My immediate plan is to present the program to a group of health plan educators who are looking for ideas for programs to offer for those insured with the health plan. My hope is the health plan educators will share the PHR program with the school districts who will then contact WHIMA to present to teachers throughout the school districts in Wisconsin.

What comments do you have about the presentation?

Wolter: It is easy to follow as everything is prepared for you, so anyone can do this. If you want support, find a friend to help you copresent. Everyone needs to know about the PHR. Everyone needs to maintain a PHR. HIM professionals need to get out there and be the PHR advocate. Anyone who is interested should contact his or her CSA.

Kellogg: The responses have been very positive so far, with people wanting to come to the second workshop after talking to friends who were in the initial presentation. My main goal is to have fun and let the participants have fun, too. Speaking in front of large (or even small) groups can be intimidating, but with a smile and a ready joke, the message can be delivered painlessly!

Lemery: I think the presentation covers the appropriate amount of information on the PHR to get the idea across that a PHR is an important means of being involved in your healthcare.

Get Involved!

AHIMA members interested in participating as either a community education coordinator or a community presenter should contact their CSAs. Two presenter training sessions will be held at AHIMA's convention on Sunday, October 16.

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