

Embarking on the Road of New Beginnings

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By Pamela Lane, MS, RHIA, interim chief executive officer

January is the month of new beginnings. It's a great time to make lists, clean out cabinets, and take stock of what's ahead of us. Sometimes the road ahead is clear... other times, we need to make educated guesses about what the future may bring.

Predicting the future, of course, is not an exact science. But by staying informed about the current environment, we can make good decisions about our own work and for the profession as a whole.

For AHIMA, the road ahead is partially determined by our strategy, which the Board of Directors reviews regularly. In 2018, we'll focus our work in four areas: preparing HIM professionals for the future, leading in informatics, leading in analytics, and continuing to champion information governance. You can read more about our strategy at www.ahima.org/about/aboutahima?tabid=strategy.

For several years now, the *Journal of AHIMA* staff has attempted to predict the top hot topics that will impact HIM professionals in the coming year. There are sweeping changes underway in HIM, so there's no shortage of hot topics to consider. The staff asks AHIMA's subject matter experts to identify areas where they feel HIM professionals should focus in the year ahead. A look at the key areas these topics cover—ranging from inpatient and outpatient coding to education and workforce to data analytics, informatics, information governance, and privacy and security—tells us how diverse our profession has become, and how much there is to learn. You can find out more in the feature article “Eight Predictions for '18.”

At the same time, the AHIMA House of Delegates has been tracing trends for the 2018 Environmental Scan report. Members of the Envisioning Collaborative, a subgroup of delegates, continuously monitor and scan the environment, resulting in an annual report that is used by the Board of Directors to set or modify the association's strategy. Focusing on areas such as technology, business drivers, workforce trends, and legislative/regulatory developments, the report allows us to understand the forces shaping our profession today and tomorrow. You can find the Environmental Scan report online in the AHIMA HIM Body of Knowledge at <http://bok.ahima.org>.

Also in this issue of the *Journal*: The industry has seen some progress on its perennial patient matching challenges, in both the public and private sectors. Allison Viola brings us the latest news in “Getting to Know You—Patient Matching Efforts Gain Traction in Industry, But Congressional Roadblock Remains.”

Patient portals, too, have become more popular, but are patients taking advantage of them? Jared Klein and his coauthors report on a study designed to better understand why patients do or do not access their doctors' primary care notes via OpenNotes in “Who Reads Their Doctor's Notes?”

Finally, the process of moving from one information system to another can present special complexities, especially surrounding legacy systems. Mary Beth Haugen and Jeff Pelot describe how Denver Health approached the problem following implementation of a new electronic health record system in “Power Down—Best Practices for Managing and Decommissioning Legacy Systems.”

I hope you'll take some time in the new year to read these forecasts, discuss how best to react, and make a plan of action for your career throughout 2018 and beyond.

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