

Embracing Patient-Centered Care and Its Roles

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Patient-centered care focuses on delivering healthcare in a manner that works best for patients. In a patient-centered approach, providers partner with patients and their family members to identify and satisfy the full range of patient needs and preferences.

Organizations practicing patient-centered care recognize that a patient is an individual to be cared for, not a medical condition to be treated. Each patient is viewed as a unique person with diverse needs. Patients and families are partners and have knowledge and expertise that is essential to their care.

Care that is truly patient-centered considers patients' cultural traditions, personal preferences and values, family situations, and lifestyles. It makes patients and their loved ones an integral part of the care team.

Patient-centered care puts responsibility for important aspects of self-care and monitoring in patients' hands along with the tools and support they need to carry out that responsibility. It ensures that transitions between providers, departments, and settings are respectful, coordinated, and efficient. When care is patient-centered, unneeded and unwanted services can be reduced.

HIM's New Patient-Centered Role

A new and exciting HIM role is to create HIM governance guidelines and policies that address the access to understandable health information and take on the challenge and responsibility for providing access to that information. Patient-centered care is the core of a high-quality healthcare system and a necessary foundation for safe, effective, efficient, timely, and equitable care.

The Institute of Medicine's 2001 report "Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century" called for healthcare systems that respect patients' values, preferences, and expressed needs; coordinate and integrate care across system boundaries; provide information, communication, and education that people need and want; and guarantee physical comfort, emotional support, and involvement of family and friends.

A healthcare organization cannot achieve success in providing patient-centered care without an HIM infrastructure of governance including policies, procedures, guidelines, and protocols that address access to medical information, personal health records, e-mails to and from physicians and other providers, and patient education information.

HIM professionals are the central drivers in establishing organizational policies that address the Joint Commission's Patient-Centered Communication standards, which were published in the *2011 Comprehensive Accreditation Manual for Hospitals: The Official Handbook*. Joint Commission surveyors began evaluating compliance with these standards on January 1, though findings will not affect accreditation.

The industry is counting on the HIM professional to provide the leadership that will secure the integrity, accuracy, and value of health information in our global, high-tech, electronic, patient-centered healthcare delivery system.

These are challenging economic and technologic times. More than ever before, AHIMA and every HIM professional must work harder, see farther, and be greater. We all must continue to provide the programs and services for today while envisioning our future.

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