

# Empowering and Engaging the Patient

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At the HIMSS 2013 conference, former US President William J. Clinton spoke about the current state of the healthcare industry. In one of my favorite quotes from his talk, Clinton said, "The beginning of empowerment is understanding." In order for patients to take charge of their health, they need access to quality health information in a format that is easy to both read and understand.

Patient engagement is critical to ensure better patient care. In studies when patients actively participate in their care, results show better outcomes and improved satisfaction. There are many "e-patients" (myself included) who feel comfortable accessing resources online and prepare in advance for their office visit. They ask questions, take notes, and ask their physician to explain their recommendations for follow-up treatment. I have even used my mobile device to discuss medications and possible interactions during an office visit.

We know that patients will also be viewing notes from their visits via OpenNotes. This new ability will certainly have an impact on the quality of documentation in the health record. Patients will also expect shared decision-making. It is important for patients and their families to be engaged in working out a treatment plan. Providers will need to present options and counsel patients on the expected risks and benefits of the proposed treatment. Gone is the "doctor knows best" era.

HIM professionals will need to play a key role in their organizations as patient portals are developed. Many individual patients have limited health literacy skills but are willing to use the Internet to access health information. It will be important to develop patient portals that are user-friendly and provide patients with access to health information that is meaningful and understandable.

On February 13, 2013, Michelle Dougherty, MA, RHIA, CHP testified on behalf of AHIMA before the ONC's Health IT Policy Committee at their Hearing on Clinical Documentation. She noted that AHIMA members have consistently identified the following challenges with clinical documentation and record management in EHR systems:

- Systems must meet the business requirements for a healthcare provider's record of care for a patient, with the capability to meet today's demands for use of information at the data and record level.
- EHR systems must better manage, preserve, and disclose health records from creation to destruction.
- More focus is needed on data quality, information integrity, and good documentation practices to achieve the policy goals of EHRs.

AHIMA provided a number of recommendations to the committee. One of the key recommendations is to advance information management and information governance in healthcare, making sure organizations are managing information as an asset and adopting proactive decision-making and oversight processes. AHIMA also recommended that policymakers and others use the HIM perspective and expertise to provide practical solutions to information integrity, management, and governance advancements. It is important for all of us to lead data governance, information management, and information governance in our organizations. Believe!

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