

First Anniversary of HIPAA Privacy: Celebrate and Recommit

Save to myBoK

by Linda Kloss, RHIA, CAE, executive vice president/CEO

This month AHIMA marks the first anniversary of the enactment of the HIPAA privacy regulations by sponsoring National Health Information Privacy and Security Week from April 11 to 17. There have been many reports in the past year about business processes disrupted due to the new privacy rule, so it may seem contrary to celebrate this first anniversary, but we are! AHIMA is sponsoring the first-ever National Health Information Privacy and Security Week to raise awareness among healthcare professionals, employers, and the public of the importance of protecting the privacy, confidentiality, and security of personal health information.

The past year has been a remarkable one for highly public challenges to privacy of personal health information. Access to records has been sought for presidential candidates and in high-profile cases such as Michael Jackson, Rush Limbaugh, and Kobe Bryant. The Department of Justice is attempting to subpoena records for partial-birth abortion cases. While state law would have guided these cases prior to April 14, 2003, now HIPAA has provided a common framework and language.

The regulations are still not well and uniformly understood, and they do need refinement, particularly in troubling areas such as medical research, authorizations, and minimum necessary. Still, considering the scope of this regulation, we should recognize and celebrate our successes.

One Year Later

In “Busier Than Ever,” we interview privacy officers to learn how their work has changed and how their understanding of it has evolved. We also learn the plans these privacy officers have for year two.

Of course, HIPAA security regulations figure prominently in these plans. Mary Thomason describes how Intermountain Health Care is conducting the security rule’s mandated risk analysis in “Preparing for the Next Big April.”

Outsourcing of transcription and other medical data services to workers in other countries has hit the headlines. As a follow-up to guidance provided in the March issue, Jill Callahan Dennis, Michael Roach, and Harry Rhodes give an overview of related privacy and security laws and regulations in “Overseas Outsourcing.” The timing is certainly right for us to have an international dialogue about global HIM issues at the 14th Congress of IFHRO, hosted by AHIMA October 9–14 in Washington, DC.

Frances Wickham Lee, Karen Wager, Andrea White, and David Ward report on the challenges of doing applied research in a real practice setting in “Research Lessons.” This work was funded by AHIMA’s Foundation of Research and Education.

Enjoy National Health Information Privacy and Security Week

So from April 11 to 17, use the tools provided on AHIMA’s Web site (www.ahima.org/hipsweek/index.cfm) to call attention to organizational accomplishments in advancing the privacy of personal health information. Prepare a report of all the improvements made in the name of improving privacy and security in your organization.

Privacy officers now report that their work involves increased public contact. While much of this is handling complaints, it may be fitting during Privacy and Security Week to host an outreach session about health information rights for citizens in your community. A visit to www.MyPHR.com will provide references to help you help consumers.

Congratulations for all the great work done by the HIM field in this year one. Let’s celebrate our successes and reaffirm our commitment to protecting confidential personal health information.

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