

Gaining a Global Perspective on HIM

Save to myBoK

by *Melanie Brodnik, PhD, RHIA*

In February this column focused on an AHIMA Board of Directors strategic initiative for HIM outreach—increasing consumer and industry awareness of HIM professionals and practice at home and abroad. This month, efforts related to the international portion of the initiative will be realized as AHIMA's 76th National Convention and Exhibit hosts the 14th Congress of the International Federation of Health Records Organizations in Washington, DC.

More than 2,000 HIM professionals and exhibitors from around the world will convene to share innovations, ideas, and solutions related to electronic health records (EHRs) and e-HIM™ practice. Let me give you an idea of what some other countries are doing to implement healthcare information infrastructures (HIIs) and EHRs, as well as a brief reminder of what is happening on our own home front.

International E-HIM

In England, the National Health Service's (NHS) Electronic Record Development and Implementation Programme, which included 17 communities, tested how electronic records can be used to share patient information across communities. Lessons learned from this initiative helped in the development of the NHS Integrated Care Records Services project, which is designed to build a lifelong health record linked with a nationwide shared summary of patient information. This is a four-year phased project with a completion date of 2008.

Our neighbor to the north, Canada, created Health Infoway in 2000. Its work in developing a pan-Canadian EHR is facilitated by several regional EHR collaboratives such as the Alberta Wellnet EHR project and the Calgary Health region EHR. In addition, Australia is working on a national health information network called HealthConnect.

E-HIM at Home

In July national coordinator for health information technology David Brailer, MD, PhD, published a strategic framework for rapid adoption of health information technology across the US. The framework requires that there be EHRs for all Americans and a national health information infrastructure (NHII). The NHII will be comprised of regional or local networks. An example is the Santa Barbara County Data Exchange, which was featured in the May 2004 issue of the journal.

In July the Santa Barbara Data Exchange and eight other US communities were awarded grants from the Foundation for eHealth Initiative and the Health Resources and Services Administration in support of the movement toward an NHII and EHRs. For the names and locations of these projects go to http://ccbh.ehealthinitiative.org/news/Awardee_PressRelease07202004.msp.

From this brief overview you can see that movement toward HIIs and EHRs is a worldwide endeavor. Connecting with colleagues beyond our borders enables us to learn from their experiences and consider how our community and e-HIM practice might benefit from this knowledge. As we begin to build local health information networks, for example, what can we learn from England or Canada's efforts? This month is truly a cause for celebration as we open our borders and share HIM solutions from a global perspective.

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