

Getting a Grip on the Importance of Data

[Save to myBoK](#)

By Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, FACHE, CAE, FAHIMA, chief executive officer

As I write this column, a new federal administration is taking shape in Washington, DC, and its future impact on healthcare regulation is unclear. In uncertain times, it's helpful to remember a bright spot: We are beginning to get a grip on the importance of data.

For example, last November, *Becker's Hospital Review* recapped its Fifth Annual CEO/CFO Roundtable. A panel of leaders identified their top challenges for this year, and one of them was clinical documentation improvement. "Without accurate clinical data, a healthcare organization is at a serious disadvantage when it comes to population health," the article reports. "Hospital leaders are both financially and clinically motivated to improve the quality and specificity of their clinical documentation data..." Another healthcare executive states in the roundtable: "Data accuracy is of primary importance moving forward."¹

The lesson? Finally, healthcare is beginning to catch on to the importance of information as a true asset. But to succeed in improving quality and satisfaction, reducing cost, and improving population health, we will need good health information. And to ensure good information, we will need information governance (IG).

AHIMA's IG efforts are starting to bear fruit as organizations begin to launch initiatives and programs that center on advancing information integrity and quality. For example, our recent IG pilot program is now yielding case studies that show how organizations have used the AHIMA IG Adoption ModelTM to improve processes and see return on investment on IG projects.

IG isn't really new territory for HIM. In the days before electronic records, we governed paper; now we are taking the next logical step with IG. For those who haven't started the IG journey, know that it's fine to start small. The important step is to start.

This month's cover story, "[Three Practical IG Projects You Should Implement Today](#)," provides a great starting point. Author Mary Butler provides examples of initiatives based on other organizations' successes that can improve the management and use of your information, garner return on investment, and provide easy wins.

AHIMA was pleased to present its Grace Award to the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center (OSUWMC) last year. In "[Welcome to HIM, Watch Your Step](#)," Kristin Nelson explores how OSUWMC created a unique job role that allows the medical center and university to operate together seamlessly and create new opportunities for onboarding, training, and education.

Finally, in the wake of RAC audits, there has been considerable focus on overpayments, but less has been said about underpayments. In "[RAC Audit Underpayments: Does CMS Owe You Money?](#)," Lisa Eramo explores some of the most common underpayments and how to identify payment gaps before the bill goes out the door.

This month AHIMA is celebrating IG month, with the spotlight on various resources and tools that can help you get a start on your IG journey. As an AHIMA member, you have a network of fellow professionals to share with and learn from. You're not alone—get started today.

Note

1. Murphy, Brooke. "[CFOs Name Top 6 Challenges in 2017](#)." *Becker's Hospital Review*. Nov. 15, 2016.

Article citation:

Gordon, Lynne Thomas. "Getting a Grip on the Importance of Data" *Journal of AHIMA* 88, no.2 (February 2017): 15.

Driving the Power of Knowledge

Copyright 2022 by The American Health Information Management Association. All Rights Reserved.