

# HIM Key to Healthcare Reform

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This promises to be a challenging year. Against the backdrop of a brittle economy, virtually every major societal system—including healthcare—needs redesign and reinvestment. Our cover story this month identifies the key HIM elements in the health information reform agenda. Federal support and leadership on these issues will be critical to successful healthcare reform overall.

AHIMA believes that consumers, providers, employers, health plans, and other stakeholders must have the standards, tools, education, and legal and regulatory environment and incentives to maintain, share, and use information for a reliable and continuously improving healthcare system. The last few years have taught us the complexity at all levels—from policy, technology and standards, and information management practices—that comprises this agenda.

AHIMA and its 53,000 members remain deeply committed to health information systems reform. There is no going back; we must pick up the pace of transformative change because all other aspects of the health reform agenda rely on our success.

## Sound Health Information Management

The *Journal* presents two original articles based on important HIM work by groups of expert volunteers. First, “Auditing Copy and Paste” offers consensus best practices for copying forward clinical documentation and auditing its use to ensure document integrity in EHRs. The article excerpts detailed advice found in a new copy and paste toolkit.

Copying clinical documentation can be a time-saver, but if not handled properly, the practice can compromise document integrity and perhaps patient safety. For organizations that allow the copy functionality in their EHR systems, sound HIM practice requires compliance with organizational, state, and federal requirements and effective audit practices.

“Universal Adapters” describes the value and challenges in fully using the Continuity of Care Document (CCD) standard for information exchange. CCD is a standard format for the exchange of basic patient information such as demographics, medications, and allergies. It specifies that SNOMED CT be used for problems and vital signs. However, few EHR systems use SNOMED CT for problems.

The article describes projects under way to bridge this gap and urges HIM involvement in all health information exchange projects to ensure that the information exchanged is useful and valuable.

Information exchange is now picking up steam, and this year can expect to see more demonstrations. Senders and receivers must design information integrity checks into these systems to avoid miscommunication.

The number of HIM professionals currently working in small and large medical practices continues to grow. In “Addressing Problems in Practice” Deborah Robb describes physician practice records management in paper, hybrid, and digital states. While the complexity of the functions vary by organization, best practices are emerging. Our challenge is to confirm them through research and deploy them in environments of continuous improvement.

## The Year of the Ox

On January 20, the 44th president takes office. On January 26, the Chinese welcome a new year. It is the year of the Ox, a sign of prosperity achieved through fortitude and hard work. Whether you live by the Gregorian, Julian, Islamic, or Chinese calendar, we wish you a wonderful New Year, one that brings prosperity and real progress through our collective fortitude and hard work.

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