

# HIM in the Spotlight: PCAST Report and Other Initiatives Bring HIM to the Forefront

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In early December the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) released "Report to the President Realizing the Full Potential of Health Information Technology to Improve Healthcare for Americans: The Path Forward." The council's path represents some significant departures from the path the industry has been mapping over the past several years.

Whether the report will affect the stage 2 meaningful use requirements currently in development will be discussed in the April HIT Policy Committee meeting. However, the council's recommendations will certainly make the management of health information the topic of industry-wide debate in 2011.

## PCAST Report's Implications

The PCAST report concentrates on health data-not records-and does not address technology issues such as hardware and software. Rather, the report focuses on data management or governance and the attributes of the data, including context, language (i.e., terminologies and classifications), and associated descriptions.

In reading the report, AHIMA staff took away different perspectives than the authors may have intended, which the association articulated in its response to the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT.

The PCAST report advocates greater use of metadata and metadata tags, which the council believes would be the best means to data interoperability and the management of granular security preferences. It notes that this type of system would sidestep the need for the traditional standards and health information exchange.

AHIMA has addressed the role of metadata for a number of years, especially in discussing the legal EHR and e-discovery.

The PCAST report also appears to take the position that data are stored in a database within the EHR system. It fails to recognize the significant need to ensure a process for collecting and classifying data from the point of inception.

The subject of documentation integrity is not new to HIM professionals. But with the advent of pay-for-performance, increased quality measurement, and EHR systems that incorporate SNOMED CT, the importance of documentation and data collection is taking on a whole new meaning along with the need for and value of healthcare data integrity.

Since the inception of the DRG system in the early 1980s, reimbursement has depended on coded data taken from documentation. The implementation of ICD-10-CM/PCS will provide more granular coded data. This data will then be combined with other data in the EHR system for a variety of secondary uses. Ensuring data integrity will be crucial for reimbursement, public health, research, and patient care.

AHIMA has advocated for a "collect once, use many times" process, where standards allow data captured in the EHR system to be applied for multiple uses downstream. This is not a new concept to HIM professionals, but it is now one that the healthcare industry and the government are finally embracing.

Look for updates in AHIMA's *e-Alert* on if and how this report will affect the industry's trajectory on EHR implementation and the meaningful use program.

AHIMA's comments on the PCAST report are available online at [www.ahima.org/advocacy](http://www.ahima.org/advocacy).

The PCAST report is available at [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/pcast-health-it-report.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/pcast-health-it-report.pdf).

## HIM Tasks for 2011

The PCAST report recommendations are just one item on AHIMA's 2011 advocacy agenda. This year the association will also address:

- The draft of value-based purchasing rules and regulations
- The ongoing implementation of ICD-10-CM/PCS
- The need to evaluate and improve documentation and data collection
- The need to protect healthcare records and healthcare data wherever they exist
- The need to provide health information as data records or sets for reporting and patient requests, potentially within a short time frame
- The need to know the data and their context to extend privacy protections, as well as identify who had access to the data and when
- The "merger" and use of clinical and administrative data for the uses described above and for auditing such as the RAC audits

HIM professionals understand that health IT is not the cure-all for these issues. The healthcare industry needs HIM professionals who can control or govern data and who understand concepts such as metadata and how organizations will govern data collection, use, and dissemination within the organization and externally.

## Step Forward

This is a momentous time in the healthcare industry's move to EHR systems and health information exchange. There are many opportunities for the HIM profession to step forward at the national, state, and institutional level.

This month, AHIMA members will come to Washington, DC, on Hill Day to educate members of Congress on the profession's role in ensuring quality health through quality information. They will raise awareness of the profession's value and advocate for federal funding to support a health information management workforce capable of supporting the nation's push for health IT.

On a local level HIM state associations are working to meet with state Medicaid agencies and other health plans to ensure their states are ready to use ICD-10-CM/PCS. In future months they also will meet with public health organizations, quality improvement organizations, health information exchange organizations, and regional extension centers to ensure they are in the ICD-10 loop and ready to deal with other data exchange needs and security issues.

In their own organizations, HIM professionals are stepping forward to ensure their organization is compliant with data needs as well as meaningful use and quality measurement reporting. HIM professionals are also addressing the documentation requirements, data integrity issues, and workflows necessary to implement EHRs and health information exchanges. Whether at the national, local (state), or organizational level, HIM professionals are calling on their education and experience to lend their leadership in this massive change healthcare is undertaking.

The demands being made on the industry to improve the quality of health, control costs, and protect patients and their information from harm will only get louder in the months to come as the meaningful use program moves to stage 2 and legislators and regulators at the state and federal level attempt to address these issues and others.

Members can put to use AHIMA's many resources, including the Web site, Body of Knowledge, Communities of Practice, and their state and local HIM associations. AHIMA's Advocacy and Public Policy Web site ([www.ahima.org/advocacy](http://www.ahima.org/advocacy)) is a great starting place for legislative news, official AHIMA commentary, AHIMA's advocacy agenda, and help in identifying and contacting state representatives.

For a report on AHIMA Hill Day, look for upcoming coverage in the *Advantage* newsletter and *Advantage e-Alert* e-mail.

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