Importance of Consumer Engagement in IG Advocacy

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We hear a lot of conversations about information governance (IG) in healthcare, and our importance in leading these initiatives. But oftentimes the IG discussion centers on the work to be done within the four walls of the institution, and does not look at the need to engage healthcare consumers in these important tasks.

Consumer engagement within any IG initiative is essential because consumers can help healthcare leaders better understand the unique information needs of patients from the consumer's perspective. Consumer input can also guide decision-makers toward developing consumer-friendly IG policies and procedures.

Healthcare professionals can assist consumers in getting involved in IG initiatives in a number of ways, such as by asking them to complete online or written surveys, through social media campaigns, or by inviting them to participate in focus groups. Healthcare professionals can take the lead in these consumer advocacy efforts to help patients find their voice and be heard in a variety of healthcare initiatives, especially those that focus on patient safety, quality of care, or healthcare policy development.

One important way for healthcare professionals to engage consumers is through advocacy. As healthcare professionals we are well aware, accurate patient identification and correct patient matching are critical to providing safe, quality care. To take a step towards resolution, AHIMA is focusing efforts in 2016 toward advocating for improved patient identity and patient matching.

The goal of AHIMA's MyHealthID advocacy campaign is to provide education to healthcare consumers about the need for a voluntary patient safety identifier. We can all participate in this initiative by asking friends and family members to show their support for a *voluntary* patient ID.

This begins by encouraging everyone to sign an online petition to the White House. The MyHealthID petition asks the federal government to **remove the federal legislative ban that currently prohibits the US Department of Health and Human Services from participating in efforts to find a patient ID solution**.

The MyHealthID petition will be open for signature at https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/ petitions from March 20 through April 19, 2016. During these 30 days, AHIMA will need to collect at least 100,000 signatures to ensure that a written response is received from the federal government.

You can help by spreading the word about the campaign both in the time leading up to and during the actual advocacy campaign. AHIMA has developed a toolkit that provides instructions and additional guidance for you to help in educating others about this issue among your coworkers, family, and friends. You can also tweet your support on Twitter by using the hashtag #MyHealthID.

As healthcare professionals, we certainly recognize that the interoperability of electronic health information is being compromised because of problems with patient identification and patient matching issues. It's time to start the conversation and help drive toward a solution.

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