

Meaningful Health Information Exchange is “Expensive”

Save to myBoK

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Remember when you had no choice but to do your banking with a teller at your local branch? Now we can bank from anywhere in the world.

If the industry’s efforts with health information exchange (HIE)-the topic of this month’s *Journal*-are a success, perhaps one day our access to health data will be global as well.

Such a scenario seems more like magical thinking than the magic of real-life technology right now. But I think that HIE may be one of the most transformative forces on the scene today.

An environmental scan conducted by the AHIMA House of Delegates profession governance team bears this out. The scan, based on input from AHIMA members, confirms that HIE is revolutionizing how information is exchanged and delivered. HIEs will accelerate new developments such as accountable care organizations (ACOs) and will enhance patient care, but controls on privacy and security are still evolving. The scan concludes that HIM professionals must ensure the data exchanged is complete, accurate, and timely.

Always-Trusted Data

But the prospect of universal HIE use can at times make me pause. If two healthcare organizations are exchanging data but are interpreting it two different ways, the information loses its value and meaning. That’s why data integrity is so important. The goal is for our data to be always-trusted data.

When I think about what the growth of HIE can mean, I’m reminded of a quote from science historian George Dyson: “We now live in a world where information is potentially unlimited. Information is cheap, but meaning is expensive.”¹

Despite the endless cacophony of data that grows every day, we can provide meaning. The HIM professional’s expertise will make it easier for accurate health information to be available when and where it is needed. The result, ultimately, will make healthcare safer, more timely, and more efficient and effective.

A Dynamic Evolution

This month’s feature articles reflect HIE’s dynamic evolution. In “[Connect the Dots](#)” Jim Romeo gathers predictions from experts on how HIE will evolve to overcome the obstacles and barriers to connecting health records across platforms to “make simple, interoperable, and scalable electronic exchange capacity available to every provider.”

Kate Berry, CEO of the National eHealth Collaborative (NeHC), describes her group’s efforts to drive progress toward successful widespread HIE through developing and disseminating knowledge and best practices among stakeholders in “[HIE Quality Check](#).”

And Glenn Mitchell explores how healthcare organizations can build upon the overlap of ICD-10 with other healthcare projects such as meaningful use, ACOs, and value-based purchasing to integrate and reach those goals faster and more efficiently in “[Synergizing ICD-10](#).”

The growth of HIE, and the challenges and opportunities it creates, continues to fascinate. It adapts despite a variety of business models, challenges in funding, and permutations of payment and delivery mechanisms. By getting involved, HIM can help lead the transformation.

Note

1. Dyson, George. "Information is Cheap, Meaning is Expensive." *The European*, Oct. 17, 2011. <http://theeuropean-magazine.com/352-dyson-george/353-evolution-and-innovation>.

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