MyHealthID: The Power of a Hundred Thousand Signatures

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Late last year, National Coordinator for Health Information Technology Karen DeSalvo challenged an audience at the Bipartisan Policy Center to commit to a future where consumers can easily and securely access their health information; where providers share health information for care with other providers (not blocking information); and where national interoperability standards and best practices related to electronic health information are implemented.[1]

The goal related to consumers seems particularly promising to me. As consumers have become more involved in decisions regarding their care, consumer interest in health information is on the rise. And that is where HIM comes in.

HIM professionals know that incorrectly identifying patients is a patient safety issue that too often results in high risk, high costs, and creates barriers to effective movement of health information. Unfortunately, our federal government partners have been prohibited from discussing solutions. AHIMA believes that technology will evolve to solve this problem, but it will require public-private collaboration and open discussion.

To raise awareness of this issue, on March 20 AHIMA will be launching an unprecedented national campaign—MyHealthID—focusing on the urgent need for a more complete patient identification system. We will be petitioning the White House to lift the government ban on the discussion of this issue. Our aim is to collect 100,000 signatures between March 20 and April 19.

This is a chance for our members to engage in dialogue in their communities—among families, neighbors, and friends. It is a chance to do something good for patients and to talk about the HIM profession. And it is a chance to move closer to the vision articulated above, with the shared goals of consumer engagement, health information exchange, and standards and interoperability.

AHIMA is working collaboratively with other health IT industry groups to advance this issue. In addition to addressing a patient safety concern, we believe the campaign intersects with AHIMA's information governance work, which demonstrates the importance of trusted information. Being able to identify the right patient is also an important component to interoperability and to the development of standards.

This month's issue of the Journal touches on the many facets of consumer engagement. In "Finding John Doe," Mary Butler explores the history and need for a patient identification solution, such as a voluntary patient safety identifier. Mark Belanger explores the lessons provider organizations have learned through the Massachusetts eHealth Collaborative's health information exchange, and what information sharing will look like moving forward in "Pedaling Out of the HIE Peloton."

And as always, there are opportunities to smooth operations for a better patient experience. Mary Beth Haugen and Amy Richardson describe opportunities that emerge in "Bridging HIM's Disconnect with IT." Lastly, Kayce Dover and Jordan Levitt describe how HIM professionals are a great fit for new patient financial advocate roles, who aid self-pay patients, in "Managing the Self-Pay Surge."

I look forward to seeing members in action during AHIMA's MyHealthID campaign, helping consumers better understand what we do: telling the patient's story.

Note

[1] DeSalvo, Karen. "Connect for Care." Health IT Buzz blog, December 11, 2015.
