

# New Standards Focus on Information Security

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by Mary Alice Hanken, PhD, RRA

The federal legislation for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and the need in healthcare for security of confidential data have come together to heighten the interest in security standards for electronic health information systems. The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) is taking the lead role in electronic health information security standards among the formal standards development organizations.

Representatives from a wide variety of organizations participate in the ASTM process. AHIMA, the Computer-based Patient Record Institute (CPRI), the American Nurses Association, the Joint Commission, healthcare organization users, vendors, system developers, federal agency staff, university academics, and others all contribute expertise. Organizations such as AHIMA and CPRI, which have published documents on related topics, also offer those documents to the subcommittee as potential source information for standards work. Therefore, there is a strong reflection of solid professional standards in the ASTM standards documents.

A number of standards have been published, and several others are in various stages of balloting. The most recently balloted standards, several of which are now in final form, address the following topics:

- Security audit and disclosure logs
- Amendments to health information
- Information access privileges to health information
- Training of persons who have access to health information
- Individual rights regarding health information
- Authentication of health information using digital signatures
- Security framework for health information
- Internet and intranet security
- User authentication and authorization

These topic areas were selected because of their relevance to the development of electronic health information systems and current legislation at the federal and state level. For example, several states have adopted or are working on digital signature legislation. ASTM standards are consensus standards. After development at the subcommittee level, the standards are balloted. Any negative votes must be resolved before the standard is adopted. All ASTM healthcare informatics standards are also American National Standards Institute standards.

Mary Alice Hanken, PhD, RRA, chairs the subcommittee on privacy, confidentiality, and access (E31.17) and Jan Lovorn chairs the subcommittee on system security (E31.20). Rick Peters is the coordinator for the ASTM section on security.

Standards are available in final and draft form from ASTM. For information on any of the above standards, contact Teresa Cendrowska, ASTM, 100 Barr Harbor Dr., West Conshohocken, PA 19428-2959. Telephone: (610) 832-9500; fax: (610) 832-9555; e-mail: [service@astm.org](mailto:service@astm.org). Visit the ASTM Web site at <http://www.astm.org>.

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