

# PHRs—The Hook to Engage and Inform Consumers?

Save to myBoK

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The Internet, cell phones, and other technologies have forever changed how we communicate and gain access to information. We manage and track our finances and medical and other benefits online. Some are even fortunate enough to be able to communicate with their physicians through secure e-mail.

Personal health records (PHRs) have the potential to be a transformative technology that enables us to be more fully engaged and informed about our own health.

“The Great PHRontier” provides an overview of the latest advances in Internet-based PHRs with interoperable features. It is estimated that more than 200 entities currently offer PHRs. The entrance of Microsoft, Google, and large employers onto the PHR scene is an important step that could help drive PHRs into the mainstream.

Underscoring the current range of PHR solutions is the PatientsLikeMe.com approach. “Openness, Not Privacy” explores this Web site that encourages individuals with serious chronic diseases such as ALS, MS, and even mood disorders to share their health information online.

## Defining and Standardizing PHRs

Given the diversity of PHR solutions and their relative immaturity, there has been lively debate about whether to define PHRs and set minimal standards or to let the market just develop. One compelling reason for trying to set minimal standards relates to confidentiality of data and the limits of HIPAA.

“IT Standards for PHRs” explores the many pros and cons of this important policy debate and the work to advance a consensus PHR definition. AHIMA produced one of the early industry definitions and has been leading efforts to define minimal standards.

“Documentation Bad Habits” explores the copy-and-paste issue that is one of the new documentation challenges of EHRs. It entails reusing or cloning documentation from past visits to save time. But this shortcut has serious implications for patient care and documentation integrity. HIM professionals must continue to lead implementation and enforcement of effective documentation practices that transcend the record’s medium.

## It’s HI Time, America!

Since February AHIMA’s Foundation of Research and Education has sponsored a public service campaign promoting PHRs. Titled “It’s HI Time, America,” the campaign to date has reached a radio audience of more than 2 million people, and articles have been published in a number of publications. More than 2,000 news media outlets received press releases about the campaign and AHIMA’s myPHR Web site. Visits to myPHR.com broke records in February with more than 850,000 hits.

The PHR campaign is supported by approximately 75 volunteer community education coordinators and 750 presenters, as well as support from our component state association presidents and presidents-elect. And AHIMA’s PHR campaign has gone “social” with links to the PHR video on YouTube and Google.

In the next three to five years, the range of personal health information tools will greatly expand. There will be new ways of communicating and sharing information with caregivers. There will be new tools and information to help all of us do a better job contributing to our own health management.

PHRs will increasingly offer advanced functionality. Like other personal information and communication technologies, they will provide a range of options so that each person can use the tools to meet his or her own needs. We believe it is “HI” time to

start educating consumers about the benefits of PHRs and about their information rights. Please join us.

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