

# Partnering with Patients in Their Healthcare

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Sometimes the way to measure how far you've come is to look back at where you've been. With all the discussion of consumer engagement in healthcare these days, I like to look back at one of AHIMA's earliest ideas about how HIM's role might evolve with regard to working with patients.

"For health information managers in more traditional roles, patients are statistics," wrote the authors of AHIMA's *Evolving HIM Careers* book in 1999. "The challenge for those who choose the new role of patient information coordinator will be to become part of a caregiving team that has direct contact with patients and their families and so a direct impact on the customer's healthcare experience."<sup>1</sup>

The book envisioned the role of "patient information coordinator," which would work directly with patients to help them to understand healthcare services. In addition to helping people navigate managed care—a prominent feature of the healthcare environment in the '90s—the patient information coordinator would ensure the timely transfer of patient information and show patients how to manage their personal health histories. "In many ways, the functions and responsibilities of patient information coordinators will represent a new kind of work for HIM professionals," the text says.

While times have changed, the concepts behind the patient information coordinator role have become even more compelling. As patient portals, mobile technology and devices, and a growing consumer interest in "value" evolve, we find there's more than ever for HIM professionals to do.

"Patients are beginning to wake up to the idea that they are entitled to timely access of their own information," writes Mary Butler in our cover story, "[Mastering the Inbox Information Era](#)." At the same time, patients are bringing their own information to the healthcare table, and HIM professionals are taking on the duty of collecting and sorting through it. The article takes a look at concerns and opportunities surrounding this issue.

In "[Patient Engagement Roles Emerging in Healthcare](#)," Michelle Millen, MSCPM, RHIT, explores various emerging roles and the skill sets HIM professionals need to succeed in them.

As mobile health devices and apps proliferate, a new frontier of interoperability challenges opens. In "[Lighting the Mobile Information FHIR](#)," Mohd Anwar, PhD, and Christopher Doss, PhD, describe a new interoperability project, FHIRframe, that could provide a common interface to mobile app developers for translating health data into consumable resources.

Finally, the success of efforts to coordinate and collaborate around a patient's health information relies on healthcare professionals working in an interdisciplinary fashion. In "[Breaking Down Healthcare's Silos](#)," Rosann O'Dell, DHSc, MS, RHIA, CDIP, and her co-authors describe how one academic medical center developed a center for interprofessional education to help students learn how to work together outside traditional department silos.

These developments show that we are truly entering a world of "HIM without walls," where patients are no longer just statistics but instead partners in their own care—and HIM professionals are able to assist with their timely access to information.

## Note

<sup>1</sup> AHIMA. *Evolving HIM Careers: Seven Roles for the Future*. Chicago, IL: AHIMA Press, 1999.

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