

Paving the Final Steps to ICD-10

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What a difference a year makes.

A year ago, the HIM industry was reeling from an unexpected delay to the implementation of ICD-10. The change was brought on at the last minute, slipped into legislation and passed within a couple of days. The result was a one-year delay of ICD-10 implementation until October 1, 2015.

The event generated waves of shock and dismay. Healthcare organizations that had invested time and money into preparation had to put things on hold. Students who were preparing to graduate and move into new jobs had to sharpen their ICD-9 skills. An industry that had been preparing diligently was now on hold.

Even worse, as a result of the delay, there was the potential for cynicism and apathy. Some might be convinced that “ICD-10 is never going to happen.” It was frustrating to be so close—yet so far—from what we as a profession believed to be a positive, transformative change.

AHIMA and its members got busy. We launched a multifaceted advocacy, outreach, and awareness campaign to advocate for a successful transition to ICD-10 in 2015.

We reached out to national and local physician and physician practice management groups to address their concerns regarding ICD-10 and offer implementation resources. We reached out to national and local media outlets to dispel myths and misinformation surrounding ICD-10 and to increase recognition of the importance of transitioning in 2015. And we made our voices heard on Capitol Hill, reaching out to legislators with thousands of Tweets, letters, calls, and visits advocating for no further delay of ICD-10.

The articles in this month’s *Journal* focus on questions readers may have as we prepare, once again, for the transition. In “[Life After ICD-10](#),” Mary Butler talks to experts who imagine what the HIM/healthcare world will be like with ICD-10-CM finally in place in the United States. Barbara Hinkle-Azzara and Kim Carr take on the skeptics in “[Answering the Tough ICD-10 Questions](#).” Managers worried about retraining coders will find useful data in Michelle Black’s “[Remediating ICD-10 Knowledge Loss](#),” which discusses the results of a survey to determine what ICD-10 data and knowledge was lost by coders during the delay and how that lost knowledge could be regained.

Outside the ICD-10 realm, the results of a focus group hone in on why people need to develop leadership skills in order to get the HIM “jobs of the future” in “[Ten Skills that Make a Great Leader](#).” And Daniel DuBrave and Matt Daigle discuss the lack of administrative, physical, and technical safeguards in place in K-12 schools to protect student health information in “[Privacy Holes in the ‘Hidden Healthcare System](#).”

As of press time we are still on track for ICD-10 implementation in October. But we’re not out of the woods yet. Those who seek to delay ICD-10 temporarily or permanently may try again. But if they do, we’ll be ready, with an army of well-informed, savvy advocates.

It is time to stop delaying the transition. The final rule adopting ICD-10 as a replacement for ICD-9-CM was published more than six years ago. ICD-10 is a long-overdue improvement over the current coding system.

As a country, we simply must move to a more modern, precise code set to be able to effectively use healthcare data to improve quality of care, safety, and outcomes, and to reform our payment system so that it rewards value rather than volume.

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