

President's Message

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Reflecting on a Year to Treasure

By Valerie Watzlaf, PhD, MPH, RHIA, FAHIMA

I cannot pick just one thing that I am most proud of from this year. I am extremely proud to have worked alongside an amazing board of directors, CEO, and AHIMA staff during my year as President and Chair of the AHIMA Board of Directors, who have inspired me each and every day with their commitment and their leadership. The passion of AHIMA's members and leadership for the association and the HIM profession is evident in every facet of the organization.

A Landmark Year at AHIMA19

In September, members convened in Chicago, IL, for the AHIMA19: Health Data and Information Conference. At this fruitful and unforgettable event, I had the privilege of addressing the attendees to speak about AHIMA's new mission, vision, and strategic plan as well as moderating a discussion with American Medical Association leaders about efforts to address the opioid epidemic. We also held AHIMA's inaugural Pitch Competition, where healthcare innovators presented creative solutions to improve the connections between people, systems, and ideas to transform health and healthcare.

The Power of Health Information

As I transition into my role as past president/chair, I would like to leave you with this message: Now is the time for us to strike out and forge paths toward those things we have wanted to accomplish, to plot the course necessary to make our dreams reality. It may mean stepping into new areas that are uncomfortable—but that's okay. Because big, bold, fearless steps like these are uncomfortable. Step into the job that you have always wanted.

Demand that seat at the table and push the status quo as soon as you sit down. Change things. Cause disruption for the betterment of our patients, the healthcare industry, and our profession. To realize the power of health information, we are asking all our members to align with AHIMA's strategy so that we can move forward together. Healthcare organizations are using innovation and billions of clinical data points to assess patient health risks and prevent adverse events. Without trusted information we could not have effective clinical decision support, accurate clinical codes, or proper reimbursement. Health information professionals work magic with information, using it to produce results in areas including data management, data analytics, privacy and security, population health, patient identity, the development of mobile health apps, artificial intelligence, and the building of health information systems—just to name a few.

When we think about the power of information, we cannot forget the power of the people who analyze and communicate that data. The people behind the data—health information professionals—are the true source of the power of information.

There is a quote from Anne Frank that has always stuck with me.

“Everyone has inside of them a piece of good news. The good news is that you don't know how great you can be, how much you can love, what you can accomplish, and what your potential is.”

Let's see how great we can be, how much we can accomplish, and what our potential is—together.

Thank you for a year that I will always treasure.

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Driving the Power of Knowledge

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