

Quality Care through Quality Information: Get Involved to Help Further HIM's Value to Healthcare

Save to myBoK

by Jill Callahan Dennis, JD, RHIA

I think there is something special about people who go into our profession and all healthcare professions. It revolves around that patient in the hospital, that resident in the nursing facility, that client in the mental health center, and that consumer maintaining a personal health record.

It's how we support their care and the people who care for them with quality information.

Improving Healthcare through Quality Information

For several years AHIMA has used the phrase "quality healthcare through quality information" to describe the association and what we're all about.

It's a simple but powerful statement. If our efforts result in better information both for patients and care providers, we've made healthcare better.

But the opposite is also true: poor information can be the cause of poor healthcare. Wherever we've not yet improved the quality of information available for healthcare decision making, we need to do more.

As evidence of the need to do more, consider the sentinel event statistics published on the Web site of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (www.jcaho.org). When reviewing the root causes of sentinel events, it's sobering to note that communication failures have been the leading cause of sentinel events in this country for the past decade. Of course, care providers communicate in many ways, but one of the main ways is through the health information we manage. Lack of information is another leading cause of sentinel events.

So what's broken? Do you see opportunities to improve healthcare, either in better documentation methods, better data content, or improved systems to make the appropriate information available when needed? And what can we do to help?

Making Progress

If our nation's move to electronic health records amounts to simply digitizing existing data collection methods, the Joint Commission statistics, as well as our own experiences, tell us that serious problems lay ahead. This offers a leadership opportunity for AHIMA and for each of us individually.

We've done much already to improve the quality of patient care, but we can do more. A key element of our e-HIM® strategy this year is to go deeper into the issue of record content and understand the impact of electronic health records—not just on our own practices, but on care outcomes.

As we begin 2006, I'm confident of our ability to answer these questions. AHIMA has 50,000 members working in more than 40 different organizational settings, holding more than 200 job titles. Our strength comes from our collective knowledge and the power of our diverse skill sets, but we need you involved in the work of the association.

What's Your Role?

I am inviting you to get involved. Help deliver on this promise of quality healthcare through quality information. Let us know what you're doing to improve the quality of health information. And let us know what you think AHIMA should be doing to

deliver on this promise.

Together, we can ensure that “quality healthcare through quality information” becomes more than a professional mission statement. We can ensure that it is an accurate description of the value our profession brings to the healthcare industry.

I’m honored to be serving as your president this year, and I look forward to working with you.

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