

# Redefining the Boundaries of HIM

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*by Linda Kloss, RHIA, CAE, executive vice president/CEO*

Health information management is an extraordinarily versatile discipline. Our work force research confirms that the field currently spans nearly 40 different work settings and more than 100 unique job titles.<sup>1</sup> In addition, AHIMA's e-HIM task force identified new roles relating to management of electronic health information.<sup>2</sup> As the US and other nations build interconnected health information systems, the criticality of information management expertise will come into sharper focus.

Meanwhile, HIM professionals are dedicated to enhancing their skills and expanding their knowledge base, according to our work force research data. Thirty percent of members report that they have taken courses to keep up with new technology, and 60 percent report that they see additional education in the future. HIM professionals are pursuing advanced degrees at a faster pace than before, with nearly 50 percent of respondents with bachelor's or graduate degrees.<sup>3</sup>

AHIMA's work force research also confirms that while about half of HIM professionals work in hospital settings, they hold a variety of roles and job titles, many of which are outside an HIM department. The HIM work force is on the move—learning, adapting, and redefining the boundaries of the profession.

## Today's Explorers

Meet R. William Treloar, MBA, RHIA, from Shands Hospital. Treloar serves as director of clinical resource management responsible for facilitating—with data—changes in patient care practice and resource use. His work directly affects how scarce resources are used to benefit patients.

Meet Pam Smith, CCS. Smith is a coding specialist for a long-term care (LTC) corporation. The demand for more rigorous information management in LTC is due to heightened public accountability, compliance, the prospective payment system, and new reporting requirements. Here, the electronic health record (EHR) is in use and it will further accelerate opportunities for HIM.

Meet Mary Ellen Mahoney, MS, RHIA. Mahoney, who serves as vice president and general manager of the digital EMR Enterprise at Cerner Corporation, is helping to make the EHR a reality. She spotlights the important role of HIM professionals in EHR decisions and implementation as she helps us understand the great opportunities that come with change. In this issue, you'll be able to take a closer look at the job descriptions and challenges these "nontraditional" HIM professionals tackle every day.

## A Framework for HIM's Future

AHIMA's HIM Education Strategy Committee is finalizing a blueprint for HIM education at the associate, bachelor, and master's degree levels. This Framework for Education is based on tomorrow's HIM jobs. The community of educators is engaged in the important process of examining emerging roles, defining competencies, and developing model curricula. Although this was last done in the mid 1990s, the competency requirements are already changing. Pathways for progression from pre-degree certificate training to associate, bachelor's, and master's degree training in HIM is an important feature of the design work.

AHIMA's 75th National Convention this month is a great chance to celebrate the Association's legacy. At the same time we will be making certain that in 2028, the profession will be celebrating 100 years and in 2078, 150 years. This is our responsibility and our promise.

## Notes

1. Wing, Paul et al. "Data for Decisions: The HIM Workforce and Workplace: 2002 Member Survey." Available in the FORE Library: HIM Body of Knowledge at [www.ahima.org](http://www.ahima.org).
2. AHIMA e-HIM Task Force. "A Vision of the e-HIM Future." Supplement to the September 2003 (vol. 74, no. 8) *Journal of AHIMA*.
3. Wing, Paul et al. "Who We Are: Findings from the 2002 Member Survey." *Journal of AHIMA* 74, no. 5 (2003): 22-30. Available in the FORE Library HIM Body of Knowledge at [www.ahima.org](http://www.ahima.org).

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