

# Society for Clinical Coding Comes Around as CoP

Save to myBoK

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Remember the glorious Knights of the Round Table who made Camelot famous? King Arthur created a meeting place with special significance, a roundtable at which every seat had equal worth. AHIMA has embraced the spirit of this concept in a program known as coding roundtables, which are designed to serve both its members and the healthcare industry on issues related to clinical code sets and coded data reporting processes. Now, the Society for Clinical Coding (SCC) has completed its transition from an affiliate of AHIMA to a Community of Practice and offers a wealth of information in the form of an online roundtable in addition to its educational, in-person events.

The Coding (SCC) Community of Practice and its associated neighborhoods went live in October 2001. There are currently more than 6,000 members in this virtual community. Here, discussions occur every day that are important to clinical coding. Professionals across the country are invited to participate in virtual community gatherings via the Internet.

## Goals of the Roundtable

One purpose of the coding roundtable is to reach out to professionals to help them climb as high as they wish to go on AHIMA's Coding Career Progression Ladder by offering them helpful information as they climb along their career.<sup>1</sup> Another purpose is to begin the enormous task of formulating code reporting requirements that are consistent across payers and practice settings. Coders want answers to questions when there are no "official" resources available.

Coding roundtables, whether virtual or face-to-face, cannot substitute for official coding advice recognized by the federal government and its agencies, but it can channel coding challenges to the AHIMA Policy and Government Relations team. In return, reliable coding resources and advice can be disseminated through the communities and provided to coders either at their computer desktops or in person at regional, state, or local meetings.

AHIMA is now positioned to serve the members of our community with high-tech and far-reaching services. Community success requires some structure and guidelines to fully exploit the new tools available. The goals of the online community roundtable include:

- improving coding skills through education
- providing networking opportunities
- attracting new members to the coding and HIM profession
- creating an environment that facilitates mentoring
- sharing coding practices, challenges, and requirements to affect policy changes in the industry

## Guidelines for the Roundtable

During the AHIMA Winter Team Talks held across the country, members discussed the online coding roundtables and their relationship to other communities within the Association. Participants confirmed that the Communities of Practice rely on members for resources and support. Rather than operate as independent entities, the roundtable communities should be an extension of both the AHIMA national and component state association structures. This approach provides collaboration, communication, and national advocacy in the industry, while using an existing structure that meets local community needs.

Participants have established guidelines and plans for the Coding (SCC) Community of Practice. They are as follows:

- A virtual private community for coding roundtable leadership, for both online and in-person events, has been established as a workshop for resources and development. All state, regional, and local roundtable coordinators will be members in

this community. This community will also include current members of the Coding Policy and Strategy Committee and Association staff involved with coding-related products, policy, or advocacy issues.

- The organizational structure gives coding roundtable coordinators the support of their component state association. All regional or local coordinators will work with the coding roundtable coordinator in their state.
- Regional coding roundtable groups that are not limited to one state may choose which state they belong to, but should coordinate with the coding roundtable representative for their chosen state. This is to facilitate national collaboration on issues of importance to clinical coding.
- All information flows through the Coding (SCC) Community of Practice and all key documents and resources are found there. This includes standardized forms for issue feedback, certificates of participation, and prepared meeting notice and agenda formats ready for customization to the appropriate venue.
- Position descriptions for coding roundtable coordinators have been developed with outlined responsibilities spelled out clearly to facilitate success.
- Educational programming is made available through AHIMA resources initially and is expected to increase as online coding roundtables contribute programming materials to a central repository to share with others.
- Coding roundtable leadership will assist and advise component state associations with coding-related programs that are part of or adjacent to state meetings.
- To assist with overall education of coding professionals, AHIMA will organize two or three regional educational conferences per year and continue to offer a coding community conference in conjunction with the AHIMA national convention. Coding roundtable leadership and the coding community at large will play a vital role in the program content of these important meetings.

## Professionals in Shining Armor

Wouldn't you like to be a knight in shining armor for your organization and the profession? Participation in a coding roundtable can accomplish personal goals, and volunteering your leadership skills can help achieve key national objectives related to coding consistency and perhaps steer the future of clinical coding-related policies.

We have saved a place for you at a very large table. For more information, log on to the AHIMA Community of Practice at [www.ahima.org](http://www.ahima.org) and explore the Coding (SCC) Communities and the associated neighborhoods that comprise almost every practice setting where codes are assigned. Watch for great things to happen as coding finds its own Camelot.

## Note

1. Scichilone, Rita. "Climbing the Coding Career Progression Ladder." *Journal of AHIMA* 73, no. 4 (2002): 32-36.

***Cheryl D'Amato, Patience Hoag, Elsa Crocker, Deborah Neville, Cheryl Carpenter-Barbee, and Laurie Bartell are community leaders of the Coding (SCC) Community of Practice. For more information or to become a member, log onto the Communities of Practice at [www.ahima.org](http://www.ahima.org).***

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