

Spelling Out the Value of Our Credentials

Save to myBoK

by Barbara Siegel, MS, RHIT

Remember eating alphabet soup when you were young? What fun it was finding words or even making up new ones. We did not know then that a part of our future was spelled out before us.

Since 1928, our HIM credentials have demonstrated professionalism and expertise. Remember when CFOs needed RRAs and ARTs to explain CCs, MDCs, and DRGs? Then, HCFA sent the PROs to monitor DRGs and the job market soared for RRAs and ARTs. HIM-credentialed professionals moved beyond acute care's doors when RBRVS, APCs, and PPS for LTC and rehab care were added to the list. And now, CMS says HIPAA is a rule.

Through only a couple of letters, a lot is said in the abbreviations above and in the HIM credentials RHIA, RHIT, CCS, CCS-P, CCA, CHP, and CHPS.

Letters of Recognition

Past recognition of our credentials has secured our existence today. Recent Association initiatives such as the work force study, advocacy, and alliance activities, published position statements, privacy seminars, and institutes are leading us to the future.

AHIMA-sponsored research tells us recruiters and employers search for candidates with current knowledge, demonstrated continuing education, and verified basic competencies. Be sure to inform recruiters and prospective employers of the "Employer Resources" section on the Web site, so they can learn about the value of our credentials.

Certification is the process that recognizes an individual's competence in a specific domain. Today, human resources professionals rely on certification as a validation of professional competence. Certification demonstrates the valuable skills of our best and brightest—sign your name with an HIM credential, and you announce expertise.

Spelling out Success

As we approach HIPAA implementation in 2003, HIM professionals are again demonstrating the value of an HIM credential. The AHIMA professional definition, published in 2001, describes our body of knowledge and unique effect in the management of healthcare data and information resources.¹ The definition identifies protecting confidentiality as a critical HIM function. Our new credential, Certified in Healthcare Privacy (CHP), validates the level of expertise required to carry out this function under the HIPAA requirements.

In 1983, Betty Payne, RRA, said, "The demands placed on medical record practitioners are far greater today than they were 25 years ago when the computer made its debut." Payne continues by asking, "Have they changed with the times? Have they developed professional attitudes and behaviors to keep pace with dynamic changes...?"²

The answer to these questions is a resounding yes.

Today, in our eighth decade, we are keeping up with the times while continually demonstrating the value of our credentials to colleagues and employers. Stir the pot and add new knowledge and competencies to spell out your own future.

Notes

1. "Health Information Management: Professional Definition." *Journal of AHIMA* 72, no. 4 (2001): insert before page 49. Developed by the 1999 and 2000 Committees on Professional Development. Available in the FORE Library: HIM Body of

Knowledge at www.ahima.org.

2. Payne, Betty K. "Professionalism and the Medical Record Practitioner." *Journal of AMRA* 54, no. 3 (1983). Available in the FORE Library: HIM Body of Knowledge at www.ahima.org.

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Driving the Power of Knowledge

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