

Spotlight on Education and Training

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by Linda L. Kloss, RHIA, CAE, FAHIMA

It's September, and students are back in school. Therefore the first Journal issue of the fall focuses on education. When we discuss education at AHIMA, we always think in two dimensions: the academic preparation of HIM experts and continuing education for those already in the field. The articles that follow explore these issues and the role of the HIM professional as a trainer and innovator.

Landmark Blueprint for HIM Education

The body of knowledge and skills for HIM practice are continually changing, but never more so than in the past decade. Healthcare and HIM are in a volatile period, as is higher education.

AHIMA has been setting HIM educational standards to ensure graduates are prepared to practice in the field since the 1930s. The Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education administers the accreditation of the field's 240-plus college and university programs.

In addition, AHIMA's HIM Education Strategy Committee monitors the healthcare environment and HIM education and maintains a mid- to long-range strategy for ensuring HIM education's relevancy.

This summer the committee published "Vision 2016: A Blueprint for Quality Education in Health Information Management" (available on the AHIMA Web site under "HIM Resources"). The findings are described in "A New Blueprint for HIM Education" by Carol Ann D. Wilhelm and Claire Dixon-Lee. The white paper lays out a number of critical recommendations to advance three major strategies by 2016:

- Transform HIM to a graduate-level profession
- Realign the HIM associate degree with work force needs
- Prepare an effective, qualified pool of HIM faculty

The strategies and recommendations were discussed in July at the Assembly on Education Summer Symposium and will be discussed in October at AHIMA's upcoming convention and exhibit during the House of Delegates meeting in Philadelphia.

We do not have another decade to debate this issue; we do not even have another year or two. In the words of Wilhelm and Dixon-Lee, if there ever was a time to agree on a sound strategy and get to work, then that time is now, or it will pass us by. Be informed. Read the Vision 2016 education white paper.

Trainers and Information Guardians

As subject matter experts—whether in coding, electronic health records, clinical documentation, or privacy—HIM professionals must train and coach others as part of their jobs. In "Tips for Trainers" we learn how HIM colleagues have overcome their fears and honed their skills as trainers. The article outlines eight tips to become a better trainer. Remember, experts are made, not born. With work, you can become a world-class trainer.

I recently met a representative of the UK's National Health Service who described her role as the information guardian. She does not hold an HIM degree, but is doing HIM work that covers data integrity, data reporting, privacy, and other functions included in the formalized HIM role in the US. "Documentation Detectives" introduces us to the information guardians from Exempla Health in Denver, and in "One-stop Shop," Cassi Birnbaum reports on advances at Rady Children's Hospital San Diego. These case studies are inspiring examples of experts in action striving for excellence.

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