

Stepping Up: 2007 Provides Opportunities for HIM Professionals to Help Shape the Future

Save to myBoK

by Bryon Pickard, MBA, RHIA

The cost of healthcare is forcing most everyone to pay higher premiums, deductibles, and copayments. At the same time, many health plans, individual employers, and government entities are championing incentive programs to encourage healthy living.

It is no secret that unhealthy lifestyles are a major contributor to increased demand for healthcare services in the United States. HIM professionals can take a role in promoting personal health awareness and ensuring the quality data that can support it.

Promoting Personal Health

I just recently completed my yearly health risk assessment, which is offered as a benefit by my employer. The assessment is tied to an incentive program provided to all employees and is designed to promote and encourage personal responsibility in individual health and wellness. The assessment, completed using a secure online tool, identifies and evaluates potential health risks. It also offers targeted education, additional face-to-face activities, and preventive actions that maintain and improve overall health.

This is the fifth year in a row I have completed the risk assessment, and the online trending graphs vividly point out opportunities for improvement. Investing the time to compile a personal health record (PHR) is a great way to take a more active role in your healthcare. If you haven't already done so, be sure to check out www.myPHR.com for information on creating and maintaining a PHR. Or better yet, join in on discussions in the Community Education Campaign Community of Practice and learn how to be a PHR advocate in your local area.

Improving Personal Health Data

We can expect the general public to demand a much greater role in their individual healthcare in the future. Last year, President Bush issued an executive order specifically calling for greater quality and pricing transparency, expanded incentives and efficiencies in healthcare, and implementation of health IT standards to facilitate greater exchange of health information.

The more ideas put forth to empower the public to better evaluate its own healthcare, the better the chances are of achieving overall improved population health. Having said that, standard clinical terminologies will be essential to interoperable exchange of health information between EHR systems as we shape the healthcare system of the future. (See the feature articles in [the January 2007 issue of *Journal of AHIMA*] for more on this topic.)

HIM professionals play a key role in ensuring data quality and facilitating systems and activities so health information is complete and reliable. We can also play an important role in educating the industry on the importance of integrating standards for necessary data collection and reporting.

A terrific way to step up and get involved in helping shape the future can be accomplished by participating in AHIMA Winter Team Talks and our annual Capitol Hill Day.

During the month of March, Team Talk meetings will take place in Sacramento, New Orleans, and Washington, DC. An online, virtual Team Talk will connect those unable to attend a face-to-face meeting. Capitol Hill Day is scheduled for March 21. Last year's elections resulted in major congressional changes, making this an important opportunity to educate policy makers on important HIM issues.

You don't have to wait until March. Invest a few moments today and visit the AHIMA Advocacy Assistant at <http://capwiz.com/ahima/home/>. Building grass-roots relationships between our organizations and local legislators is vital to our success.

Bryon Pickard (bryon.pickard@vanderbilt.edu) is director of operations at Vanderbilt Medical Group Business Office in Nashville, TN.

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