

Supporting the Future of HIM

Save to myBoK

by Bryon Pickard, MBA, RHIA

Imagine it's the year 2014. The world of HIM looks strikingly different from when I began my career retrieving medical record charts as a college student. Looking back over the past several years, the changes are monumental.

Back in the "old days," HIM practitioners, forever known as the privacy experts, played a key role in improving the quality and availability of health information. In fact, HIM's vision of quality healthcare through quality information has always been held as a standard. However, as good a job as we did, medical staff and other providers likely experienced the frustration of seeing a patient and making clinical decisions on the basis of incomplete information.

Eye to the Future

Focusing on the future and keeping 2014 in mind reminds us of the federal government's deadline for most citizens to have electronic health records (EHRs). The foundation has been laid, and stakeholders have begun the work to meet the goal of achieving nationwide interoperable EHRs. Regardless of your place of employment—whether in a hospital, long-term care, rural health, physician practice, home health, retail "minute" clinic, or any other alternative setting—e-HIM® and IT skills are now a necessity.

In many ways technology has made our work lives simpler, but it also created many challenges. Future payment methodologies and incentives based on health status (instead of services provided) and up-to-the-minute quality performance measures have elevated the importance of data accuracy, giving heightened recognition to coded data as the language of healthcare. New technologies and IT solutions continue to emerge, helping us all more effectively manage health information.

Health information silos within healthcare institutions are slowly disappearing, being replaced by point-of-care information. We're also seeing a transition from traditional record caretaker roles to patients accessing and maintaining health information, using hardware devices, software, and broadband wireless Internet connections. This transformation moves clinical care and information management into the comfort of patients' own homes.

How are you preparing for future e-HIM roles?

Bridging the Gap

One of AHIMA's essential responsibilities is developing a future work force to meet the needs of this major health information transformation. As individual HIM professionals, not only must we expand our health IT knowledge and learn new skills, we also must train a future generation. [AHIMA's Code of Ethics](#) reminds us that each of us has a professional obligation to play a part in developing and strengthening the future HIM work force.

Almost two years ago, the Florida Health Information Management Association initiated a resolution, unanimously accepted by HIM leaders nationwide, to set in motion actions in support of student transition from education to employment. Many HIM leaders are already contributing as educators, mentors, and role models to help future HIM professionals bridge the gap. But we need more of you. Marion Gentul, RHIA, CCS, sums it up best on the State Leaders and HOD Community of Practice when she asks, "When was the last time you gave somebody a chance?"

It would be bold for any of us to predict with certainty what 2014 holds for the healthcare system and the HIM profession in particular. However, even without a crystal ball, it is becoming increasingly clear that e-HIM is the bridge to the future.

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Driving the Power of Knowledge

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