

Tackling the Modern Privacy Challenge

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By Wylecia Wiggs Harris, PhD, CAE, chief executive officer

We're seeing a powerful case for the profession to keep privacy and security high on its priority list as we drive forward to a more modernized HIM practice. It's an area that continues to evolve and challenge us.

You can see the challenges in the regular news reports of privacy breaches, cyberattacks, and hacking.

You can see evolution in the federal Request for Information (RFI) issued late last year on modernizing HIPAA to further the Department of Health and Human Services Secretary's goal of promoting coordinated, value-based healthcare. (A summary of AHIMA's response to the RFI can be found on page 6, while the full comments are available in the AHIMA HIM Body of Knowledge.)

You can see more evolution in a study in *Social Science & Medicine* that indicates that consumers are likely to avoid certain kinds of health information, such as genetic testing or other test results, in the implied presence of audiences with high capacity to harm them (such as health insurers or employers)—even if the information could enable them to take life-saving action.¹ As HIM professionals, we may have the opportunity to educate people on how their information will be used and advocate for policies that could potentially reduce harm to consumers.

Cyberattacks are in the news on a regular basis, and they are a privacy or security officer's worst nightmare. What would you do if it happened at your organization? In "Hacked! What to Do Following a Cyberattack," Mary Butler discusses what HIM professionals should do following a cyberattack that impacts health information. Butler highlights best practices for contingency plans, interwoven with firsthand accounts and insights from those who have lived through and learned from these events.

As part of its transformation, AHIMA is channeling resources and time into clinical documentation improvement (CDI). We believe CDI is one of the core functions of HIM professionals, and we want to capitalize on that strength. We are pleased to publish a new research study conducted by AHIMA's CDI Practice Council on the state of the CDI industry. In "The State of CDI," Tammy Combs, RN, MSN, CCS, CDIP, CCDS, summarizes some of the key takeaways of this survey, including insights on the types of organizations where CDI professionals work, CDI credentials that are seen in the industry, and the professional backgrounds of CDI professionals. The full results of the survey can be found in the AHIMA HIM Body of Knowledge.

Finally, skills to effectively manage vendors should be part of every HIM professional's toolkit. In "What to Do (and Not Do) When Changing HIM Vendors," Angela Rose, MHA, RHIA, CHPS, FAHIMA, convenes a virtual roundtable of HIM professionals to share their challenges, lessons learned, and practical strategies that helped them ensure quality service during a vendor transition. "Always challenge, stay on top of the changes, and communicate opportunities for improvement," one participant says in the article.

Sounds like words to live by as we modernize HIM practice for the 21st century.

Note

1. Lipsey, Nikolette P. and James A. Shepperd. "The Role of Powerful Audiences in Health Information Avoidance." *Social Science & Medicine* 220 (2019): 430-439. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953618306713.

Article citation:

Wiggs Harris, Wylecia. "Tackling the Modern Privacy Challenge." *Journal of AHIMA* 90, no. 4 (April 2019): 11.

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