

# Taking a Lesson From Rosie

Save to myBoK

by Barbara P. Fuller, JD, RHIA

"We can do it!" declared the original Rosie the Riveter, an icon of World War II and a feature of AHIMA's current advertising campaign. Rosie symbolizes women's entry into the World War II work force as they filled the manpower gap created by men leaving for war. Rosie was an important contributor to a movement of lasting significance: once women left the home for jobs, they never returned.

Rosie may not be familiar to all of our members and her image does not suggest today's successful executive. But though we may not wrap our hair in bandanas or roll our sleeves up as we work, Rosie's presence in 2001 still offers food for thought.

## Determined to Make a Difference

First, take another look at the determination on Rosie's face. In her time, she was committed to making a difference in the war from the home front. Members of our profession have been equally committed over the years as we faced the challenges of Medicare in the 1960s, prospective pricing in the 1980s, industry changes in the 1990s, the technology-driven environment in 2000, and the HIPAA regulations in 2001. Members of the healthcare industry--including ourselves as HIM professionals--and the public need to realize how determined we are to meet and conquer challenges like diminishing patient privacy, errors in clinical practice, and legislation that often turns out to be less benign than originally intended. HIM professionals are neither easily deterred nor defeated. We have brought changes to healthcare and we will continue to do so. Rosie conveys that impression effectively.

## Facing the Unknown

When Rosie entered the working world, she took on the unfamiliar. Preparing ammunition and driving rivets and ambulances were not activities to which she was accustomed. Similarly, we have been successful in claiming roles originally unfamiliar to us in management, finance, education, law, enterprise, compliance, and many other areas. And as we strive to make our educational process more valuable to our students, we must also lead them in the pursuit of new and diverse opportunities especially fitted to our expertise. Rosie knew a thing or two about taking chances. So must we!

## An Example of Courage

Finally, Rosie set an example for World War II-era women and everyone today through her courage and ingenuity. Despite the examples her predecessors set, when the crucial cause of defense beckoned, she left the comfort and safety of her home and charged ahead. Think of the example she set for those who followed her! There are many uncertainties facing HIM professionals today. What further changes will technology bring to our workplace? What can be done about the diminishing number of HIM students? Where will we find manpower forces to fill the needs of the profession? When Communities of Practice are rolled out this month, will we be in line to participate and increase our networking and sources of knowledge and practice? Do we have the courage and ingenuity to meet these challenges? Rosie leapt right in and became a part of the changes surrounding her. Will we do the same?

What an exciting time to be a part of the healthcare industry! Every day, we stand on the threshold of history in the making. Our skills in managing information and requiring accurate data contribute greatly to major break-throughs. We can witness and ponder the new ethical questions surrounding fetal stem cell research, human cloning, and genetic exploration. We can lend our expertise in conquering financial fraud and waste in healthcare. Rosie would have loved it. We may not need a bandana around our hair, but rolling up our sleeves and flexing our muscle are not bad ideas!

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