

The Medical Record, 1941: Times Change, But Huffman Is Still Right

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As in life, change is a constant in the world of HIM. However, the concepts that define the medical record and the HIM profession's responsibilities remain unchanged from the early days of medical record librarians.

In the first edition of *Manual for Medical Records Librarians* in 1941 Edna K. Huffman defined the medical record as:

a systematic compilation of data pertaining to the patient's illness or condition, sufficient in degree to justify the diagnosis, to warrant the treatment, to show the progress of the case, and to state the end result.

Huffman defined the medical record librarian as:

a person trained to coordinate and organize all information submitted by the various departments so that a complete file of the patient's record may be readily available at all times.

The fact that these definitions remain largely unchanged strengthens HIM's mission, says Shirley Eichenwald Maki, MBA, RHIA, FAHIMA, assistant professor in the Department of Healthcare Informatics and Information Management at the College of St. Scholastica. The college's roots in HIM education go back to the 1930s, and Maki herself is coauthor of a widely adopted HIM textbook, *Health Information Management: Concepts, Principles, and Practice*.

"As I reflect on our professional legacy, specifically the vision and the values of the profession as voiced by its founders and builders over the decades, I am both amazed and affirmed to realize that from the inception of our profession the systematic collection and management of healthcare data at its source and its compilation within the patient's record of care were always-as they are now and as they must continue to be-the core focus of this profession's legitimate domain of practice," she notes.

"Truly, it matters not what form or format the data is collected in, the medium within which it is maintained, nor the medium through which it is distributed," Maki continues. "In all of its forms and in all of its mediums, assuring the accuracy, completeness, usefulness of, and the authorized accessibility to healthcare data and the patient record is our profession's domain of practice."

Seventy years later, Huffman would likely agree.

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