

The Pathway Forward: Transforming Healthcare

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The recent US Supreme Court decision to uphold the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) has been controversial. Whether for, against, or somewhere in between, HIM practitioners and educators need to take part in the dialogue within their organizations. Regardless of what happens with the ACA law, healthcare has reached a tipping point where spending does not necessarily reflect quality outcomes at an equal level.

The Changing Healthcare Landscape

The ongoing healthcare debate in our country comes down to ascertaining the best path forward toward affordable patient-centered care. The industry must figure out how to best pay for care using payment models based on value (quality outcomes) instead of volume (fee-for-service), and how to best encourage partnerships among stakeholders.

The private sector has shifted focus toward integration as more consumers seek out coordinated care across a health system. New payment models are emerging that emphasize consumer satisfaction and quality outcomes. Retail healthcare providers, accountable care organization (ACO) partnerships, and population health approaches are all gaining popularity.

The industry is seeing movement from acute care-centric provider organizations to market-driven innovative healthcare delivery and payment models. Population health moves healthcare beyond treating patients at an individual level, aiming for a model that delivers medical treatment and overall wellness care at general population levels. This means that everyone in a community is considered part of an organization's population, even if they have never been seen as a patient by a provider in that community.

Leading the Way in Best Practices

Healthcare reform initiatives should catch the attention of every HIM professional. Significant health information technology infrastructure and information management policies and practices are required to support emerging payment models, integrated care, ACOs, and population health management.

These initiatives raise an important issue for HIM professionals. Will you wait for HIM practices to be defined by your employer, or will you lead the way by defining HIM best practices for your employer and community partners? Will you lead the way from whatever seat you hold in your organization, helping mitigate all challenges and aspects of change management that are inevitable when changes of this magnitude take place?

Managing data for an entire population will require exceptional HIM skills in data governance, data analytics, outcomes reporting, and data security. It will also require a deep understanding of the characteristics of data and how to ensure data integrity. A working knowledge of terminologies and classifications will also be needed-especially in their relation to payment models and data mining activities. AHIMA's Core Model (available at <http://journal.ahima.org>) and recently updated Data Quality Management Model (available in the July *Journal*) provide guidance for updating HIM practices and roles.

This is an important time to stay engaged-a time to lead. You have to be in the game to play, and all HIM professionals are needed to ensure success in forging the pathway to the future of HIM. Dream Big!

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