Transforming Healthcare

Save to myBoK

by Bryon Pickard, MBA, RHIA

We live in extraordinary times. New technologies are increasingly becoming an indispensable part of everyday life. The Internet, expanding cell phone capabilities, and new mobile devices enable people to not only stay connected, but also carry out almost any task imaginable. The possibilities seem endless, and new portable gadgets have given rise to a new "thumb generation."

Less than eight years ago HIM leaders, recognizing that an interactive Web-based portal for work and professional development would be beneficial for members, embarked on an expedition. This expedition gave rise to the Communities of Practice and the FORE Library: HIM Body of Knowledge, essential elements in many HIM professionals' toolkits. If you are not fully using these resources and investing time in health IT education, you run the risk of falling behind.

Even medical schools are revising their curricula to incorporate the latest IT and communication skills. Today, physicians can no longer be expected to know every aspect of clinical care given the rapid generation of new medical knowledge. There is widespread acknowledgment that using technology and evidence-based information systems as a resource in clinical decision making can provide better outcomes and improve overall healthcare quality.

Larger, Louder, Faster

During Winter Team Talks in March, we spoke about some of the innovations that are directly affecting the HIM profession. Many of you shared personal experiences of the speed at which these changes are occurring in your own workplace; others shared the numerous challenges of working with both electronic and paper health records in a hybrid work environment. The theme for Team Talks this year-"Larger, Louder, Faster"-seems quite fitting given the fast-paced and continuously changing environment in which so many of us find ourselves.

As we approach mid-2007, health information exchanges continue to gain momentum as a means to build a nationwide health information network. The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology has extended an additional contract to AHIMA's Foundation of Research and Education to further accelerate work identifying best practices for state-level health information exchange.

Policies Needed

What is especially apparent as technologies and information exchange continue to emerge is that policies and standards governing patient confidentiality, privacy, and security must provide overarching guidance. In the same way, defining functional standards for the legal EHR within organizations and across all practice settings will continue to be a primary focus.

HIM professionals have a vital role to play in this regard. To learn the latest on policies and practices for the legal EHR, members should consider attending the June Legal EHR Conference-Ensuring Health Record Integrity. Information on this meeting is available at www.ahima.org/meetings [web page no longer available].

I got to see many of you in March at Team Talks and Capitol Hill Day, and I continue to hear and learn from many other members as well. No doubt, technology is and will always be an essential part of our lives as we head into this new and uncharted territory.

Later this month I will be attending the International Federation of Health Records Organizations Congress in Seoul, South Korea, then on to Taipei, Taiwan, to share some of the many activities helping to transform healthcare and HIM in the US.

Stay tuned and stay connected.

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