

Write Your Own Story

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By Ann Chenoweth, MBA, RHIA, FAHIMA

I've always loved January! It is not only the freshly fallen snow and warm drinks by the fire that I cherish, it is the exhilaration that every new year brings with it the optimism that new beginnings are possible and the belief that our resolutions can create wonderful outcomes and success.

Singer-songwriter Brad Paisley said it best: "Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-day book. Write a good one."

I've said it before—we are in the midst of the most transformational time in healthcare that we have seen in our lifetimes. For decades we've been operating in an environment where care was driven by providers. In the future, we will experience an environment where consumers pay more from their own pockets and expect more value in return. Where we will need to manage health individually through the continuum of care and collectively for the entire population we serve. Where the quality bar is set even higher and the basis of payment will be fundamentally different than it's ever been before.

As medical records are digitized and information technology becomes more sophisticated, physicians and hospitals face a rapid transformation in the way they treat patients and track diseases. More and more healthcare apps are being developed that enable patients to self-assess chronic diseases and share clinical information with their providers. The enthusiasm for telemedicine continues to grow, allowing greater access to medical services that might normally be unavailable.

It is our privilege as HIM professionals to work in the healthcare industry at this time in history because health information is at the heart of this transformation. The amount of clinical and financial data we work with today is unprecedented. HIM professionals are unique in that we understand information governance and data management. We understand coding and classification systems, analytics, privacy, and quality. We understand reimbursement. We understand how to optimize clinical documentation in the electronic health record. And it is only with this knowledge that our industry can reward value, lower cost, and make the healthcare experience better for the patients we serve. Our employers are counting on us. The healthcare industry is counting on us. Our patients are counting on us.

Yes, we face a disruptive healthcare environment; however, these are truly exciting times for health information management professionals. The path ahead of us will have many curves and more than a few steep hills. It won't always be easy and a commitment to learning and expanding our comfort zones will be essential.

But we do have the tools to be successful in the year ahead. Inspiration for innovation is all around us. We can lead the change to sustain, grow, and succeed, even amidst great uncertainties. We all have the opportunity to write our own storyline for 2017. Let's aim high and resolve to make it a great book.

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Article citation:

Chenoweth, Ann. "Write Your Own Story" *Journal of AHIMA* 88, no.1 (January 2017): 6.
