

Yin and Yang: Data Governance and Information Governance

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As we talk with healthcare organizations around the country about information governance (IG), many tell us they have embarked on a data governance (DG) program. Most of these data governance programs seem to be emanating from the IT area and are driven by the need to improve data quality and consistency for the enterprise data warehouse (EDW), which must now feed the organization's need for sophisticated analytics that help manage care and cost.

The light bulb has gone off that just because they now have advanced health IT systems such as electronic health record systems does not mean that they have good data. They have seen and now understand the necessity of identifying exactly who—meaning which department, business unit, or manager—is responsible and accountable for which data stores. They have begun to manage and measure data quality, AFTER putting in place policies, standards, and processes around the creation or capture of data.

The creation and capture of data, both structured and unstructured, such that it enables and supports consistency, validity, and accuracy is what data governance is all about. Creation and capture, of course, deals with inputs—and this is the key distinguishing factor of data governance from IG.

IG can be thought of as the policies, processes, standards, and designation of accountability for managing the outputs—which, of course, is information. Information needs protection and preservation, and organizations need to understand its value. After all, this information is needed for decision-making, for business functions, and must be legally and compliantly sound.

It's apparent that there is a symbiotic relationship between IG and data governance. They serve different purposes but must be coordinated to work together. They are the yin and yang or different sides of the same coin. Organizations have begun to notice that when have started on the data governance journey that they are only halfway to IG. After some success with DG they've discovered that a broader focus on how they use and manage the data that becomes information, that IG is necessary.

The good news is that the same infrastructure, people, processes, and technology that have been implemented for DG can be leveraged for IG. Organizations that have made this realization are ahead of the game. If the DG effort was driven by IT, it quickly becomes apparent that there needs to be ownership by business units, departments, and users of information.

It doesn't always happen this way—that DG leads to IG—but it is not a bad way to start and it's not uncommon to see organizations going about starting up their IG efforts this way.

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