

Case Study IX. AHIMA Membership Responsibilities

A new hospital opens in your local community and recruits for a HIM director, requiring that the person have an RHIA. A HIM professional in the community applies for the director's position in the HIM Department and is hired. Shortly after starting her job, she is the hostess to the regional health information management Association meeting that is held monthly in the various hospitals in the community. At the meeting, the new director is introduced as an RHIA. Several of the local members know that she has the RHIT credential, not the RHIA credential. Is there an ethical violation, dilemma, or concern?

In this scenario, there is an ethical concern. There may be an ethical concern if the new HIM director purposely misrepresented her credential. However, this needs to be verified. It is also quite possible that the mistake has occurred on the part of the individual introducing the director. Perhaps there is an assumption that because she is a director, she is an RHIA.

1. *What was the AHIMA member's actions that resulted in an ethics violation being brought forward?*

Determine if the RHIA reference was intentional or unintentional (could the presenter have made a mistake?).

2. *What AHIMA Ethical Codes have been violated?*

The principles that this member possibly violated include:

Principle 2. Put service and the health and welfare of persons before self-interest and conduct oneself in the practice of the profession so as to bring honor to oneself, peers, and to the health information management profession.

Principle 4. Refuse to participate in or conceal unethical practices or procedures and report such practices.

Principle 8. Represent the profession to the public in a positive manner.

Principle 11. State truthfully and accurately one's credentials, professional education, and experiences.

3. *What is the potential harm to the AHIMA organization and the AHIMA member if the organization is made aware of the ethical violation?*

If the member misrepresented her credential, the action is harmful to both the employer and AHIMA professional (reputation).

4. *What is the status of the AHIMA member's training, education, and awareness of the AHIMA Code of Ethics?*

She is an RHIT and she should be aware of the Code of Ethics. Each year, members must agree to abide by the Code of Ethics when joining or renewing AHIMA membership.

Resolution: If the member intentionally stated false credentials, that would be misrepresentation of the profession and needs to be considered strongly when evaluating ethical conduct and any further action to be taken, which could include contacting the employer.