



**Statement on Health Information Management (HIM) as a
Multi-National Profession**
Approved July 2008

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) is the leading professional organization in the United States whose mission is to “improve healthcare by advancing best practices and standards for HIM and serve as the trusted source for education, research, and professional credentialing.”

AHIMA believes that a viable HIM is necessary for the delivery of safe and effective quality healthcare, and should be practiced and recognized around the world. For 80 years, AHIMA has focused on serving its members in their careers by providing the highest quality resources and access to an ever-growing and diverse network of colleagues. That network has continued to develop as the profession has expanded beyond the traditional provider settings into all aspects of the healthcare industry.

In 2008, building on its already recognized global leadership position in the HIM profession, AHIMA will extend its network around the globe to further its mission. As AHIMA continues to improve the quality of healthcare through quality information, its success depends on factors such as:

- Direct engagement of healthcare practitioners, policymakers, and suppliers in global healthcare markets
- Increased member access to global contacts, opportunities, dialogue, and collaboration
- Increased sharing of best practices and information across borders to improve HIM practice everywhere.

The HIM profession varies around the world. Some countries enjoy a rich tradition of active professional organizations. In others, there are academic programs that provide specialized education at one or more levels of HIM and health informatics. In other countries there might be individual practitioners in HIM, but few resources to develop national associations. And in some countries, the profession is not yet established.

Changes in healthcare delivery, health and information policies, and technology suggest that more collaboration to develop uniform standards, professional ethics rules, and best practices around the world would benefit the profession, those it serves, and society as a whole. Population demographics, economic demands, and workforce shortages require more efficient healthcare systems that maximize the benefits of health information exchange. The need for increased biosurveillance calls for higher quality information access to ensure the safety of the public. Finally, technology solutions for healthcare are developed by international companies that supply markets around the world. Global standards could make the advancement and adoption of these solutions more coherent, more secure, less expensive, and more successful.

Values

AHIMA's values will guide our international work as they have guided the Association for the last 80 years:

- The public's need for timely, accurate, and secure personal health information
- Innovation and leadership in advancing HIM practices and standards worldwide
- Fostering HIM professional ethics through the AHIMA Code of Ethics
- Advocacy and interdisciplinary collaboration with other professional organizations.

Membership

AHIMA is committed to providing opportunities for HIM professionals around the world to be informed, share knowledge, and openly discuss healthcare, health information, and policy issues. We intend to expand our collective knowledge through sharing research, best practices, and standards. A more active multi-national role will enable our members to build relationships and expand their professional network and competencies. We are committed to providing value and meeting the needs of all our members, regardless of where they work or live.

AHIMA respects the mission and traditions of other associations working in health records, HIM, and health informatics. We welcome the possibility of working together through mutually constructive relationships, and invite others to reach out to us. Collectively we can maximize our value to our members, to the healthcare industry, and the patient, citizen, and consumer.

Multinational Work Force

Currently, in the US there is a shortage of HIM workers. It is predicted that there will be an insufficient supply of health information workers and other healthcare workers around the world.¹ AHIMA is committed to developing HIM professionals who add value within their organizations, community, and country to meet this growing demand and to developing the appropriate tools and infrastructure. We support training, education, professional development, and certification to HIM professionals and our members everywhere.

Research

AHIMA and its Foundation provide open access to research results in the HIM industry through *Perspectives in Health Information Management*, a peer-reviewed, online research journal. This free resource is available at www.ahima.org. We also intend to foster international research on HIM principles to identify and foster best practice to advance the body of knowledge in this field.

Education and Professional Development

AHIMA will provide leadership to develop an internationally recognized core curriculum in HIM, health records, and health informatics education. This core curriculum is intended to support academic programs and allow future exchange of faculty and students. Academic growth will provide a robust workforce for the future and create more employment opportunities for skilled personnel worldwide. Along with academic preparation, AHIMA is committed to international efforts to develop and provide professional development opportunities for current HIM professionals to ensure their continued competence and growth. Currently AHIMA provides books, periodicals, distance education, and meetings for a market that, although largely US-based, includes individuals and organizations in 71 countries around the world.

Standards

Consensus standards developed and adopted by the health information technology and HIM industries can further the adoption, implementation, and benefits of electronic health records. AHIMA is committed to work collaboratively to develop standards in areas such as data content and quality, confidentiality and security, terminologies and classifications, and electronic content and records management across different healthcare systems, regulatory regimes, and technological platforms.

Electronic Health Records and Health Information Exchange

AHIMA envisions the future of health records to be electronic, patient-centered, comprehensive, longitudinal, accessible, user-friendly, and reliable. To that end AHIMA is dedicated to:

- Promoting the migration from paper to an electronic medical records information infrastructure
- Helping improve the way institutional and personal health information and medical records are managed, and
- Delivering measurable cost and quality results from improved information management leading to cost reduction and increased interoperability across highly developed and basic technology platforms without compromising patients' local rights or practitioners' access to necessary information.

To achieve this vision, AHIMA will lead collaborative efforts to accelerate the development of standards that advance HIM practice around the globe.

Note

1. "The global shortage of health workers and its impact." WHO Fact Sheet no. 302, April 2006. Available at www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs302/en/index.html.

AHIMA is the premier association of health information management (HIM) professionals. AHIMA's 51,000 members are dedicated to the effective management of personal health information needed to deliver quality healthcare to the public. Founded in 1928 to improve the quality of medical records, AHIMA is committed to advancing the HIM profession in an increasingly electronic and global environment through leadership in advocacy, education, certification, and lifelong learning.

www.ahima.org