

*HIM—A GREAT JOB!*

William Woloszyn, RHIA

## *Privacy Officer Draws on (H)ealth (I)nformation (M)anagement Background to Facilitate HIPAA Compliance*

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and resulting standards of implementation now require healthcare organizations covered under the law to designate a privacy official who is responsible for the development and implementation of their policies and procedures relative to privacy. William Woloszyn serves as the privacy official at INTEGRIS Health in Oklahoma City, but to him the role isn't entirely new.

As a health information management (HIM) professional, Woloszyn has maintained the privacy, confidentiality, and security of patient health information since he entered the field some 13 years ago.

"HIM professionals have effectively managed the release of information in healthcare organizations for decades," says Woloszyn, who holds a Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) credential from the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA). "Establishing policy, training staff, developing consents, releasing information, and documenting information use are key elements of the HIM role. The passage and implementation of HIPAA has just brought the role to the forefront."

In his role as director of privacy and security at INTEGRIS Health, Woloszyn reports directly to the chief information officer and serves as the HIPAA project lead. He is responsible for the development and implementation of the policies and procedures relative to patient health information privacy and security, and works closely with all the organization's departments to make certain health information is protected.

Woloszyn believes that his HIM background is critical to his current position.

"My HIM background provides the why, when, who, and what to corporate-wide privacy initiatives," he says. "Technology (the security officer piece of the position) provides some 'how,' but it's not the answer in all cases. Sometimes it's just a matter of getting 'back-to-basics' in setting a culture of expectation on how to comply with HIPAA regulations and continue in the delivery of quality patient care."

The coordination of large complex projects like HIPAA is not new to Woloszyn. He served as an information systems project leader and was the information technology manager for the Y2K team, and feels that his Y2K work (it came on time and under budget) and his HIM background contributed to his being named the privacy and security designee.

"HIPAA is like Y2K squared," Woloszyn says. "It's more encompassing and long-term, but it's similar to Y2K in that it requires full and complete cooperation throughout the organization. Everyone plays - it's 'all skate.' Inside, I work with senior management, middle management, line management, and individual workers. Outside, I work with solution providers, payers, regulators, and local, state, and federal individuals and groups."

He believes that HIM professionals are well-suited to lead organization-wide programs like HIPAA. "They work with a variety of different departments and personnel during the course of their work, and can integrate their clinical knowledge with the technical, financial, and administrative. HIM professionals can relate to the individual team members."

Woloszyn likens leading a team to conducting an orchestra, "I facilitate the efforts of others to make something incredible happen that could not be done individually."

