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Consumer Health Informatics Key to Harnessing Data and Increased Patient Engagement
Health information management professionals positioned to lead interdisciplinary consumer health informatics initiatives to empower patients

Miami Beach, Fla. – Sept. 25, 2018 – Healthcare systems are leveraging the power of consumer health informatics (CHI)—using technology to collect patient health data from a variety of sources and provide real-time access of the information—with greater frequency to engage patients and improve overall quality of care.

With their extensive understanding and experience in all aspects of the health system, health information management (HIM) professionals are uniquely positioned to lead CHI initiatives, harnessing health information and empowering patients, according to the presentation "Creating a Consumer Health Informatics Initiative: An Academic Health System Approach," presented at the American Health Information Management Association's (AHIMA) 90th Annual Convention & Exhibit.

"We're at a point where the technology exists to pull data from a patient's electronic health record, patient portal, medical wearables and other sources into one place to provide the patient a complete picture and understanding of their health information," said Scott Sittig, PhD, MHI, RHIA, University of South Alabama assistant professor, health informatics, in the school of computing. "This improves health information transparency and puts the power and ownership in the patient's hands in ways that were not available before."

Drawing from examples of mobile health applications developed at the University of South Alabama Health System—such as a tool to help Type 2 diabetes patients track and understand their medical information—Sittig shared insights on developing a CHI initiative. Sittig and his colleagues found that the Type 2 diabetes mobile health application they developed succeeded in significantly improving patient self-management of their condition, self-efficacy and improvement of their overall health.

"We're at an exciting time where technological advances are making it easier to provide patients with a more extensive and real-time picture of their health," said AHIMA CEO Wylecia Wiggs

Harris, PhD, CAE. "CHI is an important emerging field, and HIM professionals stand at the forefront of the movement to empower patients by providing even greater access to their health information."

Steps HIM professionals should take to begin a CHI initiative, according to Sittig, include:

- Focus on medical departments that are already engaged in clinical informatics projects; many CHI projects can be layered on top of existing projects to enhance patient engagement and attain key quality health data indicators. Departments may include family medicine, population health management and patient engagement.
- Gain administrative support for the process by demonstrating how it can improve patient care.
- Form an interdisciplinary team to address the greatest need and a plan to develop a CHI initiative to address specific needs.
- Explore grant opportunities focused on patient engagement that can be used to build interdisciplinary teams and secure resources needed to create CHI initiatives.

Sittig's presentation is one of several addressing healthcare informatics in HIM. For details on additional presentations on this topic and others, visit the educational tracks page of the AHIMA Convention & Exhibit website.

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About AHIMA

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) represents more than 103,000 health information professionals in the United States and around the world. AHIMA is committed to promoting and advocating for best practices and effective standards in health information and to actively contributing to the development and advancement of health information professionals worldwide. AHIMA is advancing informatics, data analytics, and information governance to achieve the goal of providing expertise to ensure trusted information for healthcare. www.ahima.org