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A National Vision for Health IT Progress: Providing Recommendations on Moving Interoperability Forward

*Journal of AHIMA provides a status check on the U.S. Healthcare System
on Interoperability and Quality Strategy*

CHICAGO – November 13, 2017 – Healthcare providers and health information management (HIM) professionals are in agreement: Without widespread adoption of interoperable electronic health records (EHRs), achieving a low-cost, high-quality healthcare system in the United States is nearly impossible.

The article, "Health IT Time Out: Where is the U.S. Healthcare System on Interoperability and a Quality Strategy?" in the November/December *Journal of AHIMA*, provides a status check on health information technology adoption and standardization efforts across the healthcare continuum and outlines recommendations for streamlining interoperability.

According to the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC), 96 percent of hospitals and nearly 78 percent of office-based physicians possess a certified EHR, yet still lack the ability to consistently and easily exchange health information. There is no single program in place to ensure continued health IT progress across the nation.

"The most important argument for interoperability progress in the healthcare sector is the successful documenting and exchanging of information," said interim CEO of the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) Pamela Lane, MS, RHIA. "Now is the time to improve the usability of EHRs, support a standardized national patient identifier and continue to educate providers about the importance of interoperability."

The article suggests four ways the healthcare industry can enable continued success with adoption of interoperable health IT:

1. Encouraging **payment reform** that rewards quality and affordability will allow value-based purchasing that is in everyone's best interest both clinically and financially.

2. Championing **evolved standards for interoperability** will lay a foundation for innovation in care delivery

3. Adopting **information governance** programs and standards will remit providers to have confidence in data and better care for patients.

4. Continuing to create **greater transparency** into EHR products is critical to drive necessary innovation.

"Achieving widespread interoperability in the United States healthcare system is not a short-term, single-faceted goal," said Lane. "HIM professionals are vital in championing health IT progress and addressing issues head-on along the way."

Also in this issue:

In July 2016, ONC's former chief privacy officer Lucia Savage, JD, visited her dentist for some overdue dental work. Soon after her provider submitted a request to the insurance company for reimbursement, the insurance company denied benefits. What followed was months of calls, letters and other correspondence between Savage and her physician's practice, who would not release her personal health information (PHI) to her insurance provider.

The article, "[Bitter ROI Irony: Former ONC HIPAA Rights Advocate Faced the Same Frustrating Record Access Challenges as Other Patients](#)," is a Savage's first-person account of the saga of obtaining her PHI in order for her insurance to cover her dental work. Savage also includes recommendations on how insurance companies and physician practices can better accommodate requests for information (ROIs).

Read these articles and more in the November/December issue of the *Journal of AHIMA* or online at [journal.ahima.org](#).

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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](#)