



news

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AHIMA Survey: Two-thirds of Healthcare Organizations Lack Information Governance Strategy

Information governance critical for quality, efficient patient care, says AHIMA

CHICAGO – June 2, 2014 – Two-thirds of the responding healthcare professionals say their organizations do not have a comprehensive information governance (IG) strategy, but having one in place is a critical component in advancing patient care, improving population health and reducing costs, according to the [American Health Information Management Association \(AHIMA\)](#), who co-sponsored a survey on IG with Cohasset Associates, Inc.

In a first-of-its-kind, benchmarking survey of comprehensive IG practices in healthcare, AHIMA found that 95 percent of the more than 1,000 respondents said improving the quality and safety of patient care is a key driver for implementing IG.

A new white paper based on the survey provides an understanding of the state of IG in healthcare and a roadmap for establishing steps organizations should take to govern their information. Complete results and analysis can be found in the Cohasset Associates/AHIMA [2014 Benchmarking White Paper on Information Governance In Healthcare: A Call to Adopt Information Governance Practices](#).

“Information governance is a strategic imperative for all organizations within the healthcare ecosystem,” said AHIMA Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President Deborah Green, RHIA, MBA. “Improved quality and patient safety, cost control, care delivery redesign and responding to regulatory changes are top goals for healthcare organizations, and all are dependent on trustworthy information.”

The results indicate that there are pockets of strong IG efforts in areas such as privacy and security, but not organization-wide.

Additional findings of the survey include:

- IG programs are less prevalent and less mature in healthcare organizations than is warranted, given the importance of health information.
- The IG framework and its foundational components call for strengthening and expansion within organizations.

- Information lifecycle management practices related to core functions require improvement to ensure the trustworthiness of the information.
- Privacy policy and practices are the most developed in healthcare followed closely by information security policy and practices.
- 97 percent of respondents said essential policies for maintaining private and secure protected personal health information are in place in their organizations. However, only 81 percent report that business associate agreements are in force and routinely audited.

To prepare for information governance, AHIMA recommends programs that are cross-functional with senior level support. An organization's governance focus should not be on clinical information alone, but on non-clinical, business and operations information as well.

"I encourage my colleagues in the C-suite to make a comprehensive information governance strategy an organizational priority," said AHIMA CEO Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, FACHE, CAE, FAHIMA. "It's easy to think it can be put on hold or maintained in one department while executives deal with other challenges, but this is a mistake. Developing a strategy should be a collaborative effort and is essential to realizing the benefits of governance."

To achieve the full benefits of IG, AHIMA recommends the following be addressed:

- An accountability framework and decision rights to ensure the effective use of information, enterprise-wide.
- Defined processes, skills, and tools to manage information throughout its entire lifecycle.
- Standards, rules and guidelines for functioning in an increasingly electronic environment.

In addition to publishing a white paper on the survey results, AHIMA is convening healthcare stakeholders to develop a framework for IG in healthcare, has established an expert advisory group to review and provide input into IG development efforts and is developing resources and guidelines to aid in operationalizing IG in healthcare.

The survey of AHIMA and non-AHIMA members targeted clinical and non-clinical executives, officers, directors and managers in provider and non-provider organizations in the healthcare industry. The survey received more than 1,000 responses between March and April 2014 and was conducted with Cohasset Associates and underwritten in part by Iron Mountain.

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About AHIMA

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) represents more than 71,000 health information management and health informatics professionals in the United States and around the world. AHIMA is committed to promoting and advocating for research, best practices and effective standards in health information and to actively contributing to the development and advancement of health information professionals worldwide. AHIMA's enduring goal is quality healthcare through quality information. www.ahima.org