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233 N. Michigan Ave., 21st Fl.
Chicago, IL 60601

phone >>(312) 233-1100
fax >>(312) 233-1090
web >>www.ahima.org

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For more information, please contact:

Bridget Stratton

AHIMA

312-233-1097

bridget.stratton@ahima.org

AHIMA: Standards Essential Component to Interoperability Equation

Journal of AHIMA highlights how standards can improve health care

CHICAGO – Oct. 29, 2015 – The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) is building its standards strategy with the goal of improving healthcare interoperability. The increasing recognition of standards' critical role in interoperability is the focus of the article, "[Reformatting Healthcare Through Standards](#)," in the November issue of the *Journal of AHIMA*.

Recently, AHIMA along with HIMSS and Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE) published a first-of-its-kind [white paper](#) to guide health information management (HIM) professionals and health information technology (HIT) professionals working to develop interoperability standards.

"Consistent standards that the industry agrees on and is aware of are critical steps in the journey toward interoperability," said AHIMA CEO Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, CAE, FACHE, FAHIMA. "AHIMA is committed to working with other standards groups and key HIM and HIT stakeholders to attain support from providers and vendors. We will work toward interoperability for electronic health records (EHR) and make it easier for providers to use information to improve treatment and outcomes."

In addition to the white paper, earlier this year AHIMA submitted comments to the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) following the release of the agency's Interoperability Roadmap. In the [comment letter](#) AHIMA expressed its commitment to work with ONC and the nation on the public-private approach to address the barriers and build an interoperable health IT ecosystem.

The *Journal of AHIMA* story details what AHIMA believes are the four essential components of an interoperability framework: functional interoperability (which supports AHIMA information governance initiatives), technical interoperability (supporting interoperable health IT infrastructure), semantic interoperability (clinical documentation improvement via standards) and workforce development (building a global workforce with the necessary eHealth skills).

According to Diana Warner, MS, RHIA, CHPS, FAHIMA, AHIMA director of HIM Practice Excellence, it's important to analyze current standards.

"It is not that there are no HIM standards, we just have to review and figure out what standards do exist, work, and support HIM practices," she said in the article. "We also have to determine what is missing and what needs to be developed."

Also in this issue:

- The practice brief, "[Information Governance Offers a Strategic Approach for Healthcare \(Updated\)](#)," describes the essential aims and focus of information governance (IG) as a strategic approach for managing information assets in healthcare organizations. The twofold purpose of IG strategy is the "stewardship of information that supports compliance and risk management, (and) leveraging information to achieve the goals of the organization."
- As the cost of whole genomes sequencing declines, the amount of data generated will dramatically accelerate. The story "[Can EHRs Handle Genomics Data?](#)," examines whether EHRs will be able to meet this challenge. According to the article, "the key areas to focus on are how to safely store, smartly search, securely share, and accurately interpret this immense and vital information which will ultimately improve patient care and condense patient diagnosis times. These steps will require unprecedented cooperation between practitioners, healthcare providers, and state and local governments."

Read these articles and more in the November 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 101,000 health information professionals in the United States and around the world. AHIMA is committed to promoting and advocating for high quality 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