



news

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AHIMA Survey: Patient Matching Problems Routine in Healthcare

Though foundational to quality care, organizations struggle to match patients and records

CHICAGO (Jan. 7, 2016) — Accurate patient matching is essential to delivering quality care and driving important healthcare initiatives including health information exchange, but a lack of resources to deal with patient record duplicates poses a challenge according to a recent survey by the [American Health Information Management Association](http://www.ahima.org) (AHIMA).

The survey of AHIMA members found that more than half of health information management (HIM) professionals routinely work on mitigating possible patient record duplicates at their organization. Of those, 72 percent work on this weekly, indicating the need for a solution to ensure accurate patient matching.

AHIMA says the survey confirms the importance of having an information governance policy that addresses the need for accurately matching patient information. Results also indicate implementing quality assurance measures are critical steps to improving quality of care.

“Accurately matching the right information with the right patient is crucial to reducing potential patient safety risks,” said AHIMA CEO Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, CAE, FACHE, FAHIMA. “At the very foundation of patient care is the ability to accurately match a patient with his or her health information.”

Healthcare strategic initiatives that rely on accurate patient matching include:

- **Patient-centric care:** Accurate patient matching is key when the patient is at the center of the health system. Accurate patient identifiers serve to “link” all patient data. If the “links” do not accurately identify the correct patient with his or her information, care delivery is compromised.
- **Health information exchange:** Correlating patient data across enterprises, regions, or states requires accurate matching of patient data.
- **Population health:** While population health has many facets, the one common thread is the need to match consumer information at an individual level.
- **Analytics:** Identifying best outcomes for patient study groups, identifying consumers for engagement initiatives and effective research requires accurate patient matching.

- Finance: Value-based purchasing, risk-sharing reimbursement models, and accountable care organizations all rely on accurate patient matching.

The survey is a key step in AHIMA's efforts to lead the industry in meeting the challenges of patient matching and collaborating with healthcare experts to develop solutions. AHIMA plans to use data from the survey to shape future advocacy efforts.

"Improving patient matching efforts is a challenge we can meet," Thomas Gordon said. "The healthcare community must come together to embrace it so that accurate patient information is available when and where it is needed."

The survey of AHIMA members' experience with patient matching and linking patient records was answered by 815 participants using 12 different electronic health record systems. Key findings of the survey are available at: <http://journal.ahima.org/2016/01/06/survey-patient-matching-problems-routine-in-healthcare/>

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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