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AHIMA Supports HHS Effort to Improve Access, Use of Electronic Health Records

Leading Health Information Management Association Joins Healthcare Stakeholders to Improve Information Flow to Patients, Providers

CHICAGO – February 29, 2016 – The [American Health Information Management Association](http://www.ahima.org) announced its support today for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) initiative to implement changes that will improve how health information reaches patients and healthcare providers.

HHS Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell announced the program today that will bring together companies that provide electronic health records used by U.S. hospitals, several of the nation's health care systems, and many leading professional associations and stakeholder groups. AHIMA has pledged to support the implementation of three core principles to enhance information flow, including:

- **Consumer Access:** *To help consumers easily and securely access their electronic health information, direct it where they want, learn how their information can be shared and used, and be assured that this information will be effectively and safely used to benefit their health and that of their community.* Many of the biggest health IT developers have committed to using standardized application programming interfaces and a single shared standard for communicating with one another, Health Level 7 – Fast Health Care Interoperability Resources (FHIR®), so that user-friendly resources, like smartphone and tablet apps, can quickly be made market-ready and compatible with one another. These advances will make it easier for consumers to access their test results, track progress in their care and communicate with their providers.
- **No Information Blocking:** *To help providers share individuals' health information for care with other providers and their patients whenever permitted by law, and not block electronic health information (defined as knowingly and unreasonably interfering with information sharing).* A report to Congress by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) discussed the prevalence of information blocking.
- **Standards:** *Implement federally recognized, national interoperability standards, policies, guidance, and practices for electronic health information, and adopt best practices*

including those related to privacy and security. Many market leaders are embracing ONC's Interoperability Standards Advisory—a coordinated catalog of existing and emerging standards and implementation specifications. This guidance is updated annually in order to keep pace with developments in the health IT industry. By identifying current best practices in standards, this advisory will assist healthcare providers to more easily collaborate with one another and share data across “interoperable” electronic health records.

“AHIMA believes these three principles will make a significant and meaningful difference in making sure health information is available where and when it’s needed,” said AHIMA CEO Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, CAE, FACHE, FAHIMA. “AHIMA and its thousands of member health information management professionals are proud to partner with HHS and other leading associations, healthcare systems and electronic health record providers to advance this critical cause.”

According to HHS, currently, electronic health information flows only in pockets of the health care system and business practices can inhibit data sharing. Even when electronic health information is shared, it can be underused and difficult to access due to hard-to-use technology or the use of different standards. HHS believes the commitments by the stakeholders, including AHIMA, will help lead to a future where electronic health data is shared seamlessly and easily accessible when and where it matters most to providers and consumers. To see a full list of individual organizations that has made commitments and their pledges visit: www.healthit.gov/commitment.

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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 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