



news

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HIM Professionals Play Vital Role in New Age of Consumer Engagement

AHIMA consumer engagement toolkit outlines expanding HIM roles

CHICAGO – March 10, 2016 – The increased use of electronic health records (EHRs), healthcare applications and other technologies by consumers created a shift in the way healthcare providers engage with patients, expanding the role of health information management (HIM) professionals in consumer engagement.

A new [American Health Information Management Association \(AHIMA\) Consumer Engagement Toolkit](#) addresses how the culture change in healthcare organizations is creating opportunities for HIM professionals to be more actively involved with consumers. HIM professionals can ensure patients have the tools and knowledge to access their health information when and where they need it.

Instead of simply making an appointment and going to a physician's office, patients are turning to social media and other technologies such as patient portals, e-mail and online office visits to form a new relationship with their healthcare providers. This change has increased the importance of a consumer engagement strategy for healthcare organizations.

More than a series of release of information requests and questions answered through a patient portal, healthcare consumer engagement has evolved into the need for an ongoing dialogue between patients and their providers, said AHIMA CEO Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, CAE, FACHE, FAHIMA.

"Traditionally the clinical care team played the major role in the patient experience," Thomas Gordon said. "But the change in the way patients consume their health information means today's HIM professional plays an important role in giving healthcare consumers the tools needed to make all interactions and communications with their providers meaningful and efficient. The HIM professional is an important part of a team of care professionals at an organization that promotes a culture of valuable service to the patient."

The toolkit provides resources to develop a healthcare consumer engagement initiative and outlines some of the changing roles for HIM professionals, including:

- A patient healthcare navigator or advocate to collaborate with clinical staff to ensure patients receive copies of their health records and assist patients in reviewing those records.
- A release of information specialist to guide consumers in appropriately accessing their records in compliance with regulatory guidelines.
- A leadership role in training employees on the importance of consumer engagement as well as on new technologies and initiatives such as health information exchanges.

“We’re in a new age of consumer engagement that is not only transforming the healthcare experience but the role of HIM professionals,” said Thomas Gordon. “AHIMA is committed to helping its members and the profession continue to grow and advocate for safe, quality and accessible information for the healthcare consumer.”

Additional resources on HIM careers, including the HIM Career Map[®], are available on AHIMA’s website at <http://www.ahima.org/careers>.

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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