



**news**

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

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

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AT 12:01 A.M., ET MONDAY, MARCH 21**

**For more information, please contact:**

Bridget Stratton

Public Relations

312-233-1097

[bridget.stratton@ahima.org](mailto:bridget.stratton@ahima.org)

## **AHIMA Launches Petition for National Voluntary Patient Safety Identifier**

*Urges White House to Address Critical Patient Safety Need*

CHICAGO – March 21, 2016 – The [American Health Information Management Association](#) announced today it has launched a [petition](#) to ask the White House to address the need for a national voluntary patient safety identifier by removing legislative language that has prevented open discussion between the government and others, including AHIMA, who are seeking a solution to this critical patient safety issue.

The petition, available on [petitions.whitehouse.gov](http://petitions.whitehouse.gov), needs 100,000 signatures by April 19 to ensure a response from the Obama administration.

“As a patient, you know there’s only one you. But sometimes a name or some personal information is so similar to someone else’s that doctors’ offices or hospitals can have a hard time identifying records correctly,” said AHIMA CEO Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, CAE, FACHE, FAHIMA. “It’s a dangerous and costly problem that can lead to missed diagnoses, inappropriate treatments or unnecessary tests, as well as making it difficult for providers to exchange health information.”

AHIMA believes a possible solution is a voluntary patient safety identifier that could allow patients to create a way for medical systems to recognize them quickly and accurately. An identifier will help ensure all each patient’s health information is kept together and is complete, all the while remaining under the patient’s control.

The petition aims to encourage federal government leaders to engage experts in the private sector who have experience in accurately identifying people, as they do in banking and other financial businesses, along with security experts. With 80 percent of doctors and 97 percent of hospitals currently using an electronic health record, having a way to accurately and safely exchange information can make healthcare more safe and effective.

“The voluntary patient safety identifier – created and controlled by patients – will be a complete and positive game-changer in healthcare in terms of patient safety, quality of care and financial consequences,” said Thomas Gordon. “We encourage patients, healthcare professionals and

the public to think about patient safety and sign our online petition and to share it with their networks. We want to make healthcare safer, more efficient and more effective for everyone.”

The petition specifically asks for the removal of the federal legislative ban that currently prohibits the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) from participating in efforts to find a patient identification solution.

The challenge of accurate patient identification is illustrated by a study conducted by the Harris County Hospital District in Houston, which found that, among 3.5 million patients, there were nearly 70,000 instances where two or more patients shared the same last name, first name and date of birth. Among these were 2,488 different patients named Maria Garcia and 231 of those shared the same birth date.

###

#### **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](http://www.ahima.org)