A road map for information governance implementation in healthcare

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The need for reliable information in healthcare has no geographic boundaries. Around the globe there are healthcare delivery transformation initiatives geared toward improving the safety and quality of care and the health of populations, while at the same time reducing cost. These initiatives cannot be achieved without trusted information. The growth of data, rapid adoption of information technologies, and proliferation of devices and applications are contributing to concerns regarding data and information integrity. These concerns are leading to the recognition that governance practices are essential to achieving a state of trust in healthcare information.

Recognition of the need to govern information is not limited to healthcare. Across industries, there is growing acceptance of the strategic value of information and the need to adopt information governance (IG) in order to ensure that information is valued at the same level as any strategic capital asset. Recent surveys indicate that adoption of IG in healthcare is reaching adoption levels similar to those of other industries (Cohasset Associates and American Health Information Management Association, 2015; Teschner, 2015).

Since 2013, the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) has been actively promoting the adoption of information governance for healthcare and has led multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary efforts to develop a framework for the industry. This framework and its tools have been piloted in organisations of varying types across the healthcare ecosystem in the United States. One of the many tools developed by AHIMA is the “Information Governance Road Map”, which is the subject of this article (AHIMA, n.d.). This road map is available as a free download from AHIMA’s IG site: IGiq.org.

AHIMA’s definition and basic tenets of information governance for healthcare

Through the work on an industry multi-stakeholder IG task force, AHIMA has defined information governance as: “an organization-wide framework for managing information throughout its lifecycle and for supporting the organization’s strategy, operations, regulatory, legal, risk, and environmental requirements” (AHIMA, n.d.). Before viewing the road map itself, it is important to understand basic tenets or beliefs of AHIMA’s IG model and framework. These include:

- Information across the organisation matters and therefore all business units or departments of the organisation should be included and held accountable for standard IG practices – this helps to break-down the “silos” which today are contributing to a lack of consistency in data and information reliability across the organisation.
- IG applies to all categories of information, not just clinical and demographic information. No types of information should be excluded. Data and information whether, for example, clinical, demographic, billing, accounts payable, vendor, human resources, employee or payer, should all be included.
- Data and information, regardless of where it resides, such as off-site storage, on servers within or outside the facility, on any ancillary storage devices, and whether in an off-site or co-located data centre, and whether in a public or private cloud managed by the facility or managed by a vendor, should be included. This includes paper/hard copy, film, digital, and images of all types.
- IG should be adopted and practiced by any and all types of organisations in the healthcare ecosystem that are information intensive. In other words, any organisation that creates, generates, receives, processes, “cleans”, audits, exchanges, interfaces, or otherwise uses and passes on data and/or information should practice information governance. The consequences of passing on unreliable data and information in healthcare are just too severe for the healthcare industry to accept anything less.
- Organisations should adopt a model for IG that is geared to the needs and priorities of healthcare.
- Organisations should regularly self-assess IG progress and competencies (AHIMA, n.d.).
- Organisations should strive to become mature in their organisational competencies for governing information.
- Organisations should hold their healthcare and business partners accountable for practicing IG.
Many tools and resources for implementing and advancing IG in healthcare are available as free downloads at AHIMA’s IG site. These include:

- information governance principles for healthcare (IGPHC™)
- Cohasset, and AHIMA IG survey white papers
- definitions
- AHIMA IG adoption model (IGAM™) and organisation competencies
- infographics on aspects of IG for healthcare
- introductory video on IG for healthcare
- introduction of IG for executives
- sample project plan, position descriptions, and charter
- suggested reading and publications on IG and numerous other IG references, including specific tools referenced on the “Information Governance Road Map”.

**Scanning the road map**

The road map guides organisations in IG program implementation through grouping essential actions to be taken before moving from one stage of implementation to the next. The road map groupings enable implementation practices that, when followed and employed at a pace appropriate for the organisation, will help to achieve the organisation’s IG vision. Content of the map, when viewed at a high level, includes: IG buy in and support; organisational structure and charter; leadership; gap analysis; project definition and completion; budgeting; and long-term progress measurement. A formal project plan should be built using the road map to establish timelines and responsibilities.

Professionals interested in charting the course to IG for their organisations are encouraged to access the series of articles published in the 2016 March, June, July, September, October, and November issues of the *Journal of AHIMA*. These articles are crafted to detail the IG implementation journey. Insights from AHIMA IG pilot sites around the country are featured in these articles, yielding valuable perspectives and “lessons learned”.

**Getting to “Mile Marker 1”** includes the following key actions to initiate IG for any organisation:

- make the case for enterprise-wide IG
- identify executive sponsor and stakeholders
- establish an interdisciplinary committee
- provide training in IG for committee members and stakeholders
- conduct a baseline IG assessment.

Promoting awareness and understanding, gaining acceptance of the need, and excitement about the opportunities are important achievements in this stage. Valuable discussions and lessons learned on IG initiation are included in the *Journal of AHIMA* article published in March 2016 (Meehan, 2016a).

**Achieving “Mile Marker 2”** involves the important actions to:

- create an IG program charter
- create an IG strategy and initial IG project plan
- celebrate IG quick wins
- provide IG leadership training for selected leaders
- appoint an IG officer.

In this stage key stakeholders should begin to see the program take shape and to connect with potential benefits of IG. Important instruction, resources and discussions on IG implementation are relayed in the June and July 2016 issues of the *Journal of AHIMA* (Meehan, 2016a; Reeves, 2016a).

**Getting to “Mile Marker 3”** requires completing the following actions:

- use analysis to determine IG return on investments
- reassess IG program quarterly
- compare assessment to the baseline and determine next steps quarterly
- leverage clinical, financial, and administrative information to demonstrate impact and value to the IG program
- conduct internal and external audit of the IG program.

In this stage, tangible evidence of the value of IG is seen. It is all about the data, its analysis, and an improved sense of trusting data, which enables greater trust in organisational decisions made. Getting to this stage of IG implementation is explained in an article in the September 2016 issue of the *Journal of AHIMA* (Reeves, 2016b).

**Getting to “Mile Marker 4”** accomplishes and achieves high levels of IG maturity.

Organisations getting to this level have achieved advanced maturity in governing their organisations’ information. This is based on both internal assessment and external objective validation. Naturally, self-assessment occurs and is repeated over time, and with each assessment a set of actions is defined to take the organisation to the next level. There are two articles on achieving advanced maturity with IG for healthcare in the October and November 2016 issues of the *Journal of AHIMA*. These include pointers on gaining and sustaining progress, proving the value of IG, and validation of the advanced level of maturity that the organisation has self-assessed (Meehan, 2016b; Downing, 2016).

...there is growing acceptance of the strategic value of information and the need to adopt information governance in order to ensure that information is valued at the same level as any strategic capital asset.
With technological advances and pressures to innovate and transform healthcare delivery, we are seeing emerging and evolving roles in healthcare. Roles in health information and its management are changing and providing opportunities to lead and support information governance in healthcare. Health information management professionals are prime candidates for these opportunities; we already have the expertise in information management for healthcare. This will serve as an extremely valuable foundation for governance of data and information across the enterprise.

References

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The journey to enterprise-wide information governance (IG) often seems difficult, but with the right direction and tools, successful navigation and realizing your IG vision is possible.

**START**
- Make the case for enterprise-wide IG
- Identify executive sponsor/stakeholders
- Establish interdisciplinary committee
- Attend IG HEALTHRATER training
- Baseline IG assessment:
  - Identify IG gaps
  - Measure baseline performance

**MILE MARKER 1**
- Appoint IG Officer: Using AHIMA IG Toolkit/CIGO Job Description
- Attend AHIMA IG Leadership Forum meeting
- Celebrate IG Quick Wins
- Create IG strategy and initial project plan using AHIMA toolkit
- Create IG Program Charter

**MILE MARKER 2**
- Implement IG plan, strategy, and projects
- Perform IG gap analysis
- Measure/track Complete IG projects
- Train Workforce on IG

**MILE MARKER 3**
- Compare quarterly IG programs with IG HEALTHRATER baseline assessment and determine next steps
- Reassess quarterly IG programs with IG HEALTHRATER
- Use analysis to demonstrate IG return on investments
- Create formal budget for IG office and program
- Achieve and Sustain IGAM Level 5™

**MILE MARKER 4**
- Internal and external audit of IG performance
- Leverage clinical, financial, and administrative information to demonstrate excellence in impact and value of service provided
- Compare quarterly IG HEALTHRATER assessments and determine next steps
- Internal and external audit of IG performance

**Put Your Success to Work!**
Achieving IGAM Level 5™ is a competitive advantage. When you’ve reached IGAM Level 5™, the healthcare industry now knows you have successfully implemented an enterprise-wide IG strategy and are committed to utilizing trusted data within your organization.

IG Advisors™ is leading the healthcare industry in expert IG strategy and implementation. The professionals at IG Advisors™ can help your organization develop an enterprise-wide IG strategy, create an organizational IG framework, help manage information risk, security, privacy, protection, compliance, and so much more!

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