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Media Contact:

Jessica Cohen

Aria Marketing

jcohen@ariamarketing.com

617-332-9999 x203

AHIOS Spring Meeting Brings Together Industry Luminaries to Discuss the Importance of Patient Privacy

Dr. Deborah Peel leads discussion on RAC concerns, patient privacy rights and ROI

BOSTON, Mass., June 16, 2010 — The Association of Health Information Outsourcing Services (AHIOS), an organization committed to promoting excellence in the handling and dissemination of confidential patient-identifiable information, gathered for its annual Spring meeting in New Orleans on March 30. Joining the AHIOS members at the meeting were healthcare industry expert, Dr. Deborah Peel of Patient Privacy Rights and an expert a from a Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) vendor. Both presenters emphasized the impact of RAC audits and discussed increasing concerns surrounding patient privacy to companies that specialize in Health Information Management (HIM) outsourcing.

Dr. Peel, founder and chair of Patient Privacy Rights, a nonprofit health privacy organization with 10,000 members in all 50 states, gave a presentation that focused on the importance of patient privacy and the flaws with our nation's current HIM system. Dr. Peel outlined the changes in federal patient privacy laws, including the implementation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). In 2002, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) amended the HIPAA privacy rule, eliminating the patient's right of consent. Dr. Peel highlighted the myriad of negative ramifications that result when patients cannot control the use or disclosure of their sensitive health information: ranging from job discrimination to patient refusal to receive critical care for stigmatized and costly diseases like cancer and depression. Peel quoted from HIPAA that "35% of Fortune 500 companies admit to using medical records for hiring and promotions, and millions of Americans refuse to seek treatment for disease and mental illness because of privacy concerns."

The second keynote speaker from an organization focused on healthcare claims integrity, discussed the significance that the impending increase in RAC audits will have on HIM departments. The importance of precise claims submissions in keeping up with the large amount of new requests is crucial for hospitals. The accuracy and timeliness of claims are more important than ever as CMS is becoming stricter about

missed record deadlines and technical denials. Therefore, it is important that those handling the release of records are thoroughly trained in this complex process.

“We are honored to have had one of the top industry authorities present at our annual meeting,” said Matt Rohs, president of AHIOS. “These meetings are invaluable for our member’s success in the ROI field. Having the top ROI leaders gather together and discuss pressing HIM issues is the best way for all of us to stay current in this ever-evolving industry.”

About the Association of Health Information Outsourcing Services

Established in 1996, AHIOS promotes, strengthens and enhances the health information management outsourcing industry while ensuring excellence in the handling and dissemination of confidential patient-identifiable information. Its goals are to increase awareness of the value, importance and complexity of the industry’s services; establish standards of excellence for the industry of health information management outsourcing; pursue fair and equitable treatment of the industry through legislative, regulatory and legal processes; and create educational and networking opportunities for members. To learn more about AHIOS, please visit www.AHIOS.org.

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