

## **Exciting Times for the AHRA and its Members**

### **Submitted by Roseanne Gallant – AHRA Member and Chair, Council on Education (COE), CHIMA**

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On September 18<sup>th</sup>, I made a presentation to the AHRA Board of Directors regarding the following two issues and asked the Board to consider striking a task team to explore two critical issues facing our profession.

Issue 1: Health Information Management (HIM) Professional educational requirements vis-à-vis current HSAA pay grades in Alberta.

Issue 2: Education and awareness for our colleagues in regards to our professional name change, new educational requirements and the difference between job classifications and associated levels of compensation.

I am very pleased that the AHRA has agreed to strike such a task team. As you know, our profession has made a shift from two professional designations; Health Record Administrator (HRA) and Health Record Technician (HRT) to one professional designation of Health Information Management Professionals. We have undergone a number of professional designation changes over the course of our history. Many of you will recall when we made the last shift in the early 1970's from Medical Record Librarian (MRL) and Accredited Record Technical (ART) to Health Record Administrator CCHRA(C) and Health Record Technician CCHRA(A). Once again, in reflection of educational reform and professional advancements our profession has moved to a new professional designation.

It is extremely important for all HIM professionals, whether an AHRA member or not, to be educated on our new professional designation. Armed with knowledge, new and existing professionals can begin to educate others both within and outside our employment environments. It is also important for current professionals to understand that existing professional designations are still valid and only through attrition will the levels of HRA and HRT disappear completely. However, although those credentials remain it is appropriate and essential that we begin to refer to ourselves as HIM professionals regardless of the credential HRA, HRT or HIM that you possess.

It's a big job to effect change. Members must first understand the change, then embrace the change and finally be able to clearly articulate the change to other stakeholders.

The second issue is one of compensation levels. Currently our profession is classified within the HSAA on three pay levels; HRT I, HRT II/HRA I and HRA II. It is important for the task team to investigate how our new designation and educational requirements would be accommodated within the current pay grades or is change required. It is equally important for our profession to understand the differences between a position title, qualifications necessary to perform that function (professional designations) and compensation levels as currently defined within the HSAA.

Our profession has created a great deal of confusion by commonly mixing up these concepts and interchanging the professional designation titles with position titles and compensation levels within the HSAA. See the following examples to illustrate this point:

Example showing proper use of position title, qualification/designation and compensation level:

Position Title: Health Records Supervisor

Qualification required: HRA

Compensation: HSAA – HRA II

Example showing the use of the qualification/designation as a position title and a compensation level:

Position Title: Health Record Technician - HRT

Qualification required: HRT I

Compensation: HSAA – HRT I

Example showing the use of the qualification/designation as a compensation level:

Position Title: Health Record Coder

Qualification required: HRT I

Compensation: HSAA – HRT I

This most recent shift for our profession will require effort on behalf of all HIM professionals. It is the Association's will to assist members in making this change. I thank the Association for their support and I am looking forward to participating on this task force and invite others to join me.

Respectfully submitted by

Roseanne Gallant CCHRA ( C )

AHRA Member and Chair, COE, CHIMA