

Global Policy Recommendations for Growing the Health Information Workforce and Implementing Artificial Intelligence

The American Health Information Management Association® (AHIMA) and International Federation of Health Information Management Associations (IFHIMA) jointly convened the first annual Global Virtual Policy Summit in November 2024 to discuss key topics impacting the health information (HI) profession. Discussions were wide-ranging and included speakers from across the globe working in both HI and global health leadership policy positions. As part of the Summit, speakers provided policy recommendations for how best to move forward relating to both artificial intelligence (AI) and the HI workforce. This issue brief summarizes key findings from the Summit and related policy recommendations.

Artificial Intelligence & New Technologies

Current State of Play:

- Some countries or regions have begun to explore regulating AI but the lack of a consistent regulatory framework across countries creates a varied compliance environment.
- Many HI professionals are embracing AI tools as part of their work, including computer-assisted coding, AI risk adjustment, and other tools identified by HI professionals as part of the AHIMA workforce and AI study in **Figure 1**.¹
- Concerns exist globally about the quality of data being used to develop AI.
- Speakers acknowledged that AI tools will evolve over time, but a well-trained and highly skilled HI workforce can limit negative disruptions, as shown during previous technology disruptions such as the shift from paper to electronic records.
- It is important for HI professionals to understand how AI-generated data is used, the architectures of the systems the AI exists within, how the outputs are captured in the record, and how the AI is trained.

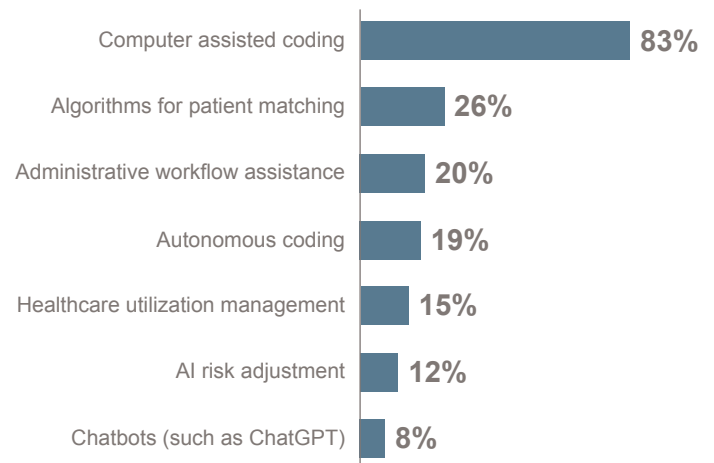
Policy Recommendations:

- HI professionals should be involved in the design and implementation of AI and new technologies early in the process.
- Governments should support and provide activities to upskill the healthcare workforce to improve AI readiness.
- Global collaboration is needed across governments to create diverse datasets to ensure AI is trained on accurate data that is relevant to its population, and to establish consistent regulatory frameworks for AI use in healthcare.
- Investment is needed to establish sustainable, well-defined data architectures and related infrastructure to support and understand AI's role and function in the healthcare ecosystem.

¹Available at: <https://7932134.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/7932134/Whitepapers/Workforce-AI%20Study%20Final.pdf>.

Figure 11

AI/ML Tools Used



QUESTION: What types of AI/ML does your department use? *Select all that apply.* (N=1068)
NOTE: Respondents were able to select multiple response options, so totals do not equal 100%

Figure 1

Improving Global HI Workforce Readiness

Current State of Play:

The global HI workforce are experts in understanding and governing how health information is captured, shared, and used. While countries have different healthcare systems and regulations, HI professionals consistently play a critical role in ensuring patients and providers have the right data, where they need it, and when they need it. Additional investment is needed from countries to ensure HI professionals remain prepared to tackle the health information challenges of tomorrow.

Policy Recommendations:

- Countries should support HI professionals through the creation and distribution of training/education materials on key topics, such as AI, data privacy and security, interoperability, release of information, and other emerging issues in healthcare.
- Positive incentives should be provided by countries where appropriate to support continued specialized training.
- Guidance is required from countries regarding the ethical uses of health information and technology to promote alignment of ethical conduct standards.
- Countries should promote accurate documentation and capture of current-day HI professional responsibilities in job descriptions and labor classifications to ensure the HI profession's role is accurately represented across healthcare.

Digital Health in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

Low- and middle-income countries are rapidly adopting a broad range of digital health tools within their health systems for a range of uses. They face many of the same challenges as high-income countries. While digital transformations may take place at a different speed in high-income countries, those in low- and middle-income countries find they are able to move at a faster pace due to the learnings from transformation initiatives in other countries.

Policy Recommendations:

- Digital healthcare transformation activities should begin with the adoption of a unified national digital health strategy to ensure a clear vision with strong foundational aims that include measurable key milestones to gauge success.
- Governments from low- and middle-income countries should support a well-trained and informed workforce that can adapt to each specific country's needs through initiatives such as workforce development and reskilling education.
- Developing data architecture and technology/policy standards to support data sharing and continuity of care should be prioritized by governments to maximize digital healthcare transformation efforts.
- Open and widely used international data standards should be adopted to promote interoperability and data sharing nationally and across borders.

