



April 2005

**RE: Changes to the CHIMA Membership Categories**

Dear Member:

When the Canadian Health Record Association evolved into the Canadian Health Information Management Association, our objectives included:

- Elevate the profile of our profession
- Heighten our recognition within the healthcare industry
- Ensure the financial viability of our organization

Here, in 2005, we are making great strides in building clout for those of us who provide health information management. Yet, as the pressures impacting the ever-changing healthcare industry grow across Canada, we must broaden our impact. We must continue to be a vibrant, steadfast, stable alliance of dedicated professionals who share the goal of safeguarding the integrity of patient data.

One concept being considered by the Association to further our objectives is broadening the base of our organization, making CHIMA's awareness more pervasive and our relevance more vital. To achieve this goal, CHIMA's Membership Category Task Force has investigated the benefits of introducing an Affiliate Membership, and we would like to briefly explore this with you.

**Currently**

At this time, CHIMA's corporate sponsorships allow companies and other associations to be affiliated with us. But there is no methodology in place for a non-certified individual who wishes to be a member of the Association. The proposed Affiliate Membership would address this omission by providing access to non-certified individuals – educators, information or privacy officers, health information specialists, and persons who may be directors of health information services but who are not credentialed Health Information Management (HIM) professionals – who wish to become CHIMA members. In our opinion, their addition to our ranks would contribute to the growth of our Association by making us more inclusive, increasing our financial strength and supporting the greater influence we seek.

**Our uniqueness**

As you consider the value of this new membership classification, remember that as an organization, we are unique. Unlike other health professionals:

- Our certification is at the national level, rather than at the provincial tier
- We operate the Association and the Canadian College of Health Record Administrators through one management organization

It is important to recognize that membership in the Canadian Health Information Management Association does not, in fact, reflect qualification as a certified HIM professional. Specifically,

- We are certified by – but not members of – the Canadian College of Health Record Administrators
- We are members of – but not certified by – the Association

As a result, we are comfortable that adopting an Affiliate Membership category would affect *only* membership within CHIMA and not in any way impact our status as certified HIM professionals from the Canadian College of Health Record Administrators. Nor would we allow any affiliate member access to that status.

**A Growing Trend**

CHIMA is not alone in considering the need to broaden our organization. Consider others that have adopted this strategy to strengthen their operations:

- The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) offers associate memberships to faculty members who are not physiotherapy graduates, and affiliate memberships to support personnel, and who may not vote or hold office
- The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) offers associate memberships for those interested or involved in occupational therapy
- The Canadian Nurses Association (CAN) offers associate and affiliate memberships
- The American Health Information Management Association offers an associate membership for those who do not meet the criteria of active membership

**Our Membership roster would become more comprehensive**

Moving toward adopting the new membership classification, our line-up would look like this:

<b>PROPOSED CHIMA MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION</b>	
• ACTIVE	certified individual
• INACTIVE	certified individual not currently working
• AFFILIATE MEMBER	non-certified individual interested in HIM
• STUDENT	individuals enrolled in a CCHRA-approved school for HIM
• RETIRED	members of any category who have retired from their career
• HONOURARY	individuals who are recommended to, and endorsed by, the Board on the basis of significant contribution

**A process for clarity**

As with any change, there are issues accompanying this membership evolution. For instance, we will need to re-draft our bylaws and carefully define the roles for both the Association and the College to clearly articulate that non-credentialed individuals are not seen as part of the College membership. We are sure we can deal with these steps as part of the process.

Ultimately we require a vote by active CHIMA members to support this initiative. We have adopted an active communication process to ensure all aspects of the Affiliate Membership are clear. With this in mind, we are asking that if you have any questions, please visit the link on our website ([www.chima-cchra.ca/mem/index.html](http://www.chima-cchra.ca/mem/index.html)) labeled "Affiliate Membership Vote" which will be available after April 20th. There you will find a resource where you can submit questions or provide comments. We will compile the most relevant information from your input, and report back to you so that you can then make an informed choice and vote accordingly.

**In conclusion**

The addition of a CHIMA Affiliate Membership category has been formally requested by many individuals working in areas related to health information management. Studies show that adopting this format can potentially increase our revenues in the next three years, thereby adding to the vitality of our organization.

We believe the addition of Affiliate Membership is an advantage to CHIMA, and we support this initiative. To us, it seems a very logical step in strengthening the organization, sustaining our role as a highly professional association that promotes excellence in all aspects of health information management.

We look forward to your input.

Sincerely,



Gail Crook, CHE, CCHRA(C)



Kelly Abrams, CCHRA(C), BHA

Executive Director and Registrar

Chair, Board of Directors