



April 2005

**RE: Opportunity to Challenge the National Certification Examination**

Dear Member:

We are writing today to invite your consideration of a plan being discussed to offer beneficial results for the Canadian Health Information Management Association (CHIMA), including:

- Increasing CHIMA's membership to strengthen our organization
- Broadening CHIMA's national representation and influence
- Promoting Health Information Management positions be filled by CCHRA-certified professionals
- Enhancing the ability of Health Information Management (HIM) professionals to make an authoritative contribution to Canada's healthcare system on a national basis
- Supporting HIM professionals in their desire to be considered for a broad range of health information management positions and initiatives

To achieve these goals, CHIMA proposes to offer an opportunity for those who are working in the Health Information Management field and are graduates of CCHRA-recognized HIM programs, but have not successfully challenged the CCHRA national certification examination. This offer will be 'open', without a limitation of time connected to it.

***Action***

To support this plan, the national Council on Education (COE) would approve eligibility for those who have not taken the examination in the past, or failed it without successful re-write(s), to have an opportunity to challenge the national examination for certification.

***Ensuring a consistent, professional level of expertise***

We think this 'amnesty' program is a unique opportunity to get everyone 'on the same page', ensuring consistency, so that our status and role as Health Information Management professionals are confirmed and entrenched in Canada's healthcare system. It demonstrates the importance of professional credentials in the workforce and recognizes that health information management is a vital set of skills and knowledge that should be carried out by trained, certified specialists who recognize the three Domains of Practice (Privacy, Data Quality and e-HIM).

***Things to Think About***

We believe this strategy is a logical step because of the positive outcomes listed above, but we also accept it may create issues amongst some of our membership.

-- see over --

For instance, some non-certified members became graduates of the previous 'one year program' for which an examination no longer exists. If they were to challenge today's examination, it would be for the current two-year program, but taking the second year now and subsequently writing the current certification examination may not be realistic for their personal situations, and we are certainly sympathetic to this predicament. However, I should point out that for potential examination challengers, if CHIMA members agree to this opportunity, it would be the applicant's responsibility to perform a gap analysis to understand where they may need more study or experience. An available "gap analysis" tool that will be useful to applicants in this endeavor is the *Compendium of National Distance Education Courses*. This is a highly constructive, relevant tool for upgrading skills through education that would support applicants in understanding where they may need more study or experience.

Those who have taken the two-year program and successfully completed the examination may question extending the opportunity to others. But we would ask you to consider the greater good of building CHIMA to the levels we need in order to be a defining force in health information management across the country. Without an inclusive attitude, we run the risk of limiting our effectiveness and, frankly, our clout within the healthcare sector.

Another issue revolves around the fact that in the days of privately run institutions and before incorporation, many were advised by their superiors at the time not to bother seeking certification because it was unlikely to become a requirement. Times have changed; it is fitting that these individuals should have a chance to upgrade their professional status.

### ***Impartiality***

It is important to recognize that fairness and credibility will be ensured if we go forward. Those electing to take this opportunity will be graduates of CCHRA-recognized programs, they would be writing the same examination, at the same time, as current graduates. They would be tested based on their academic and experiential knowledge, gained by course completion, work-place experience, on the job training, ongoing formal coursework, informal personal study, mentoring and networking. Just as all candidates do, they will pay for the examination and challenge it at their own risk. Also, as with all candidates, successful completion of the examination will demonstrate that they have met the standards of the profession as set by CCHRA.

### ***Next Steps***

This initiative requires a vote by active CHIMA members. Between now and the ballot count, we will adopt an active communication process to ensure all aspects of the opportunity for challenging the examination are clear. Should you have questions or wish to state an opinion, we invite you to visit the link on our website ([www.chima-cchra.ca/mem/index.html](http://www.chima-cchra.ca/mem/index.html)) labeled "National Certification Examination Vote" which will be available after April 25th.

### ***In Conclusion***

We encourage you to consider the value of this certification examination challenge initiative and encourage you to take action now by completing the enclosed ballot. We believe it is an effective way to sustain CHIMA's role as a highly professional association that promotes excellence in all aspects of health information management.

We appreciate your attention to this very important milestone. Please complete and mail your ballot today.

Sincerely,



Gail Crook, CHE, CCHRA(C)  
Executive Director and Registrar



Kelly Abrams, CCHRA(C), BHA  
Chair, Board of Directors