

By Curtis Rooney and Meredith Young

You say HIGPA, I say HISCI



Many are familiar with the Health Industry Group

Purchasing Association (HIGPA). Founded in 1990, HIGPA's overall mission has remained the same (e.g., advocacy, education, ethics, information and liaison) for almost 20 years. Recently, however, its focus on legislative and regulatory advocacy has dramatically increased, as threats to the GPO business model have become more common and the healthcare system more political.

Until 2006, HIGPA's membership was comprised of both group purchasing organizations and supplier companies. It became apparent, however, that we should separate into two organizations to best serve the interests and needs of both the GPO and supplier communities. With this in mind, in January 2007, HIGPA became an association solely for GPOs. Meanwhile, another organization dedicated solely to the improvement of the entire supply chain was created – the Healthcare Industry Supply Chain Institute (HISCI).

HISCI's membership is comprised of suppliers, manufacturers, distributors and GPOs. This overlap was created to ensure suppliers that the strong networking benefits they experienced in HIGPA would carry over into their HISCI membership. Both organizations are closely aligned, sharing many of the same staff and board members, and co-hosting the annual International Expo and National Pharmacy Forum. For example, Curtis Rooney, president of HIGPA, sits on the HISCI board in an ex-officio capacity, while Meredith Young is HISCI's executive director.


Members of each group get access to discounted event registration rates, daily e-news updates, opportunities for networking and education, and interaction with the most influential players in the healthcare supply chain. It's important to understand that both organizations work together to address the same industry issues, but from different perspectives. The beauty of this partnership lies in our ability to have unique

goals, objectives, and mission statements, while partnering on many industry issues to find solutions that benefit all.

Creating a separate, sister organization also enables HISCI members to focus on initiatives and programs that otherwise would not have occurred under HIGPA. Both organizations enjoy similar benefits of membership, but as a standalone organization, HISCI can delve into specific issues affecting the entire supply chain community.

For instance, both organizations have partnered to develop a best practice initiative around rostering. (Rostering is the process by which GPOs and suppliers organize and classify data elements to identify GPO members and delivery of goods to them.) HISCI's Rostering Task Force has collaborated with their GPO counterparts via the Committee for Healthcare e-Standards (CHeS, which is now part of HIGPA) to develop a Best Practice Roster, which is available for public comment on HISCI's Web site. We hope to unveil the final product in early 2010, and encourage all supply chain partners to adopt this best practice mode.

HISCI has conducted a great deal of research on vendor credentialing. To address the problems with credentialing, HISCI has engaged a third party to conduct extensive research on the impact of credentialing requirements to each company. We hope you'll participate in this research so the industry can adopt standards around credentialing.

Our ultimate goal is to serve as the hub for all supply chain members, facilitate dialogue among them, and ultimately affect the cost and delivery of quality healthcare to the patient. Through partnership, collaboration, research, and education, we know that each organization will bring tangible solutions to the industry. For more information on HIGPA and HISCI, please visit our Web sites at www.higpa.org and www.hisci-net.org. 

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