

## AHRA: Regulatory experts share latest on key issues

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AHRA's 2016 Spring Conference is currently underway in Chicago, and attendees were able to catch up on some of the imaging industry's many regulatory issues today thanks to a detailed presentation from Sheila Sferrella, Regent Health Resources senior vice president and former AHRA president, and Melody W. Mulaik, president and Co-Founder of Coding Strategies, Inc.



Sferrella spoke with RadiologyBusiness.com before presenting, noting that recent surveys suggest providers are having trouble becoming fully compliant with the XR-29-2013 CT standard, also known as Smart Dose CT.

Sferrella discussed the XR-29 standard at length with RadiologyBusiness.com in [October 2015](#), detailing efforts by the AHRA, American College of Radiology, Radiology Business Management Association, American Association of Physicists in Medicine, and Healthcare Financial Management Association to convince CMS to delay compliance for a full year. No delay ever happened, however, and the standard became official on Jan. 1, 2016.

Sferrella said that, as she expected, there has been some confusion about certain elements of the standard, especially when it comes to labeling non-compliant scans with a modifier.

"We asked how facilities applied the CT modifier if they were not compliant on one or more of their scanners," Sferrella said. "These responses are all over, with some responding 'finance,' 'radiology,' 'coders,' 'IT,' or 'other.' Of the responses, only 16 percent are completely automated. The rest of the responses range between 'partially automated' to 'completely manual.' This was a point the AHRA made in their letters to CMS in the fall."

Sferrella also has her eyes on the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016, which is scheduled to hit imaging providers performing scans on analog x-ray systems with payment reductions of 20 percent beginning next year. As part of the same act, imaging providers using computed radiography equipment will be hit with payment reductions of 7 percent beginning in 2018.

She said AHRA's Regulatory Affairs Committee will be sending a survey soon to explore potential problems with the legislation.

"We will try to send a survey to both AHRA and RBMA members so we get a good response from both hospital facilities and imaging centers," Sferrella said.

Sferrella added that it has become increasingly difficult to keep up with all the regulatory issues radiologists have on their plate, even for her.

"It is impossible to do it on your own," Sferrella said. "In the last year, the AHRA has hired a firm to help the Regulatory Affairs Committee track all the regulatory changes proposed around the imaging space. That is in addition to the hours Melody, the committee and I put in on a monthly basis. I would recommend radiology professionals join a professional organization so they have access to the type of information we provide for members."

<http://ow.ly/ZByRn>