The formation of the Philippine Medical Records Association (PMRA) was initially a response to the call of the Philippines Department of Health for the revision of the *Manual on Medical Records Procedure* in 1980. World Health Organization (WHO) consultant James Holdich, who was a member of the committee created for the purpose of undertaking this task, perceived a strong need for an organisation that could unite medical records practitioners in the Philippines. This need also originated from a lack of a formal curriculum on HIM in this country. Holdich urged medical records practitioners to work on the standardisation of systems and procedures in medical records.

Organisational efforts pioneered by Holdich led to a meeting of medical records officers on 17 March 1980, and this was immediately followed by the election of officers on 30 March 1980. Presy Gran, a Colombo Scholar and WHO Grantee in Medical Records Management, was elected president. The first set of officers began work on the formulation of the Constitution and by-laws of the Association in the same year.

On 27 August 1981, the Association was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as a non-stock, non-profit organisation, through the effort of the second president, Evelyn Diocson. The first PMRA newsletter, edited by Carmen Padua and Nonie Quiambao, was published in April 1982.

During the third year after the Association’s birth, activities focused on the upgrading of systems and procedures of medical records and recruitment of members. As the years went by, the Association recorded a number of remarkable accomplishments, foremost of which were the two seminar-workshops and a scientific lecture by a US Medical Records Consultant, Audrey Schaffer. It was during this period that PMRA gained significant headway, with strong advisory support offered by the late medicolegal expert Dr. Constantino Nuñez, and the Department of Health Director, Dr. Zenaida dela Fuente. The Association likewise succeeded in making representations to the Department of Health of Saudi Arabia, concerning recruitment agencies and the Association’s application and acceptance to be a member country of the International Federation of Health Records Organizations (IFHRO).

The PMRA took the initiative and enthusiastically pursued its goals and objectives. It continued to strengthen its linkages with the Department of Health, the Philippine Hospital Association and IFHRO. The following were some of its accomplishments:

- revival of the PMRA newsletter
- selection of PMRA officers to the Department of Health’s Medical Records Committee
- conduct of a survey on the status of Medical Records in Metro Manila
- establishment of the PMRA Chapter in Region III
- production of lectures and updates on Medical Terminologies, Medical Records Procedures and Personnel Management
- conduct of the First Seminar-Workshop on Medical Records Management in RTHC III in San Fernando, Pampanga
- selected PMRA officers comprised the nucleus of resource persons on the Medical Records Management Training Program of the Hospital Operations and Management Service of the Department of Health.

As a professional organisation, meetings transcended into scientific forums, and training sessions which focused on the legal implications of medical records were conducted for the members. The PMRA appeal and position papers, which were submitted to the Compensation and Position Classification Bureau of the Department of Budget and Management, provided an avenue for advocating for upgrading of the medical records managers, especially those in government service.

The 1990s was a decade of growth, during which a series of workshops on medical terminologies, physiology and anatomy, medicolegal issues, coding of diseases and operations, reimbursements and computerisation were conducted.

The year 2000 was even more significant for the Association, because PMRA was lucky enough to have a seat at the Executive Committee of the International Federation of Health Records Organizations and to work closely with the World Health Organization. It was during the Thirteenth Congress of IFHRO, held in Australia, that the first Asian (a Filipina) was elected to the Executive Committee. The PMRA was also able to establish better ties with the World Health Organization through its Regional Director, Dr. Chong.

Today, the PMRA stands resolute, fully prepared to undertake bigger and more challenging tasks. This time, there is no turning back.

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