

Rolling with the Changes

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by Jessica Squazzo, assistant editor

“Managing change is always going to be a challenge. We're always learning and there's always going to be change.”

—Christina Janus, MBA, RHIA, manager of medical record services at Akron General Medical Center in Akron, OH

Christina Janus, MBA, RHIA, has a steadfast approach to handling change. If she needs to learn more about a topic she takes the initiative—she’s always teaching herself.

Janus, manager of medical record services at Akron General Medical Center (AGMC) in Akron, OH, uses lifelong learning to prepare for her state-of-the-art job and involvement in numerous professional activities.

A Knack for Management

While obtaining her bachelor’s degree in HIM at the Ohio State University, Janus was already planning her next step. “I knew right away that I would go back and get my master’s,” she says. “I liked blending both business and a healthcare background.”

She came to her current position in 1999 after many years of HIM experience, including supervisor, manager, and director positions. At AGMC, she oversees coding and reimbursement and is also in charge of staffing, planning, coordinating work flow, and performance monitoring, and she acts as interdepartmental liaison to the medical record services department.

When she came to AGMC, the facility was initiating its electronic health record (EHR) project, led by the project’s co-chairs, the CIO of AGMC and Susan Heiser, RHIA, AGMC’s director of medical records. Janus joined a “very large interdisciplinary team” that contributed to the project’s success.

According to Janus, the transition from paper-based records to the EHR was one of the biggest changes she has had to manage in her career, but she and her team found ways to successfully tackle the process. “The challenge was met through constant communication, working through the issues, perseverance, and celebrating both small and large milestones,” she says.

Growing with the Technology

AGMC was one of the first facilities in the nation to implement the EHR, an opportunity Janus appreciates. “By supporting the EHR environment, this organization has offered me the ability to grow with the technology,” she says.

Now, the facility is preparing to roll out a Web-enabled version of the product. This is still no easy task, Janus says, but the fact that AGMC already has an EHR in place makes it an easier transition. Moving from the paper record to the EHR, however, does not mean that old problems disappear. “When implementing an EHR, many of the same HIM functions of the paper-based record don’t go away,” she says. “There are some things that are constant—it’s not a whole new world.”

From 2001 to 2002, Janus went back to school to take graduate-level courses in e-business foundations and technology. When Janus found that the courses didn’t cover the health information aspect, she researched it herself.

Using the information gained from her classes and personal research, Janus developed “E-Health Foundations,” an online course for HIM professionals. Anyone can take the course, and it is available on the Ohio HIMA (OHIMA) Web site at www.ohima.org.

Never Stop Learning

Janus also makes time for other professional activities, including involvement in OHIMA. Next month she will complete her tenure as treasurer to become president-elect.

She is also a facilitator for the E-Health Community of Practice (CoP), which includes resources and discussions about e-health as it applies to the HIM professional. The CoPs are a perfect tool for professionals like Janus, who have dedicated themselves to lifelong learning. Thanks to a positive attitude and a desire to learn, she is ready to meet any challenge.

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