



*HIM—A GREAT PROFESSION!*

## Desla Mancilla, RHIA

*(H)ealth (I)nformation (M)anagement*

*Proves to Be the Right Fit*

Like most college sophomores Desla Mancilla wasn't quite sure what she wanted to be when she grew up. She was interested in the healthcare field but didn't feel drawn to work at the patient care level.

"A friend of mine was in nursing and told me about the medical records department, or what is now called the health information management (HIM) department, in the hospital where she was working," says Mancilla. "It seemed like it would be a good fit for me and I pursued it."

Seventeen years after taking her friend's advice, she still finds her career in HIM fulfilling.

After earning her associate's degree in medical record technology from Indiana University Northwest, she began her HIM career as an Accredited Record Technician (ART), now called a Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT), in a nursing unit. "This was a wonderful launch for my career because I learned a little about almost every area of health information management," said Mancilla. "I had daily communication with nursing, ancillary and medical staff. I assembled, analyzed, coded and abstracted medical records and even communicated directly with patients about release of information matters."

Taking a broad approach to her career development she went on to be a HIM supervisor, worked in cancer registry and quality management, taught as an adjunct faculty in a local HIM program, worked at the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), did a brief stint in a release of information service and then went back to the hospital setting as a medical record systems analyst. Along the way she earned her bachelor's degree in (HIM), allowing her to advance to a higher level of management and receive the Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) credential she recently completed a master's degree in public affairs from Indiana University Northwest, which provided Mancilla with a greater understanding of finance, and organizational structure. Mancilla is currently the Information Protection Officer at Community Hospital in Munster, IN. In this role she serves as the department head overseeing the implementation of the hospital's information management functions and strategies.

"My career in HIM demonstrates how broad the field is and the variety of paths from which to choose," says Mancilla. "As long as you work hard and further your education, it is easy to direct your efforts in a HIM area in which you can both excel and enjoy."