

Member of the Month

Kelly Romano

Interviewed and written by Hillary Hei



Kelly, right, with her family.

Role: Director of Infection Control and Patient Safety, Einstein Healthcare Network

Years of IP service: Officially 14 years. Before becoming an IP, Kelly started as a Disease Intervention Specialist for the Montgomery County Health Department. At the time HIV was a newly reportable disease, and Kelly remembers the prototypal process of validating pulled patient diagnosis codes using floppy discs on a locked computer in a locked cabinet in a small room. Because she needed to contact hospitals for verification, she became friends with Maureen Luschini, an IP at Montgomery Hospital. Maureen became her mentor, helping with chart reviews and stoking her interest in other infectious diseases.

In the meantime, Kelly obtained her MPH from West Chester in Complimentary and Alternative Therapies after recognizing the popularity of holistic medicine. Upon receiving her degree an IP position was open at Montgomery Hospital, and she convinced the team to take on a non-clinical epidemiologist. Onboarding during the enactment of PA Act 52, Kelly states "I thought I had made the wrong decision, but I'm glad I worked through it because it was the best decision I ever made."

"Every single employee [at the hospital] is contributing to my success. If they didn't exist, I couldn't be successful."

Proudest professional accomplishment? The 2019 APIC Hero of Infection Prevention Award. Kelly had no idea that she was even nominated. For her, to grow up in a town that was 1 square mile and be the first in her family to graduate from college, she never expected to be recognized on a national level. "To have someone else recognize your grind everyday...is pretty cool." However, Kelly quickly followed up with her gratitude for her colleagues at Einstein. "...I don't feel like I go above and beyond. I just feel like I'm doing my job. Every single employee [at the hospital] is contributing to my success. If they didn't exist, I couldn't be successful."

Best skill to make a better IP? Work with and take advice from the staff in the institution – it's what makes you a good leader or influencer. If you don't talk to the people on the front line and get their input, you can't succeed.

Other fun facts about Kelly:

Best vacation location: Any beach

Hobbies:

Weightlifting;

Swimming

Favorite food:

TACOS

Hidden

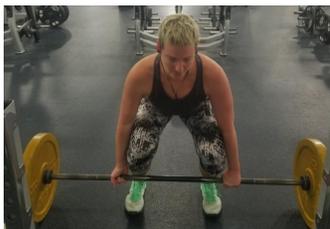
talents: Irish

step dancing, belly dancing

Nickname: "SHE-HULK" and "Next Level" -

Dubbed by friends who do long distance road cycling (Her longest ride was 102 miles in a day; her group used to train for a 3 day, 200+ miler)

Kelly can be reached at: RomanoKe@einstein.edu



What continues to draw you to this field? Now also acting as Patient Safety Officer at Einstein, Kelly is very interested in the role of Human Factors in healthcare. Human Factors encompasses all borders and all processes in the institution, and she often wonders how to utilize this when giving IP recommendations. She was so intrigued that she also earned her online Human Factors certification from the University of Michigan last year!

How do you define success? Kelly quickly answered with, "I still have a lot of work to do; I'm not done." However, she emphasized that her definition of success is the ability to leave work at work and have your own time at home. After beating breast cancer twice, she now devotes the same amount of time and energy to her homelife as she does for her job.

What do you wish to see for the future in APIC? New IPs! With many of our seasoned IPs retiring, we lose a lot of incredible knowledge. She urges all of us to help nurture others who may be interested in what we do.