

Member of the Month

Marissa McMeen

Interviewed and written by Hillary Hei



Role: Public Health Analyst/Infection Preventionist, Lantana Consulting Group; Contractor for NHSN

Years of IP service: 10

Marissa started as a microbiologist in Clinical Lab Sciences at A.I. Dupont. While working full-time, she went back to school for her MPH. For her capstone, she partnered with Infectious Disease physicians and the lab to do a project on Antimicrobial Stewardship. It was during that time that some suggested for Marissa to consider the IP profession. "I liked the interaction piece with people," she said. However the next step in her career was to help her health system's transition into EPIC, which led to another opportunity in laboratory information systems (LIS) at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. When she had had her fill of LIS, she then transitioned into a full-time IP.

After 10 years as an IP at Jefferson, Marissa continued to explore the field. Her next position was with the PA Department of Health as a Quality Improvement Specialist reviewing IPC plans for healthcare institutions. "Even with my experience, I didn't realize how in-depth [the plans] were supposed to be," she said. Today, Marissa works for a small healthcare data consulting company and serves as a contractor for NHSN. Have you ever sent an HAI inquiry to NHSN? Marissa is part of the team that answers challenging surveillance questions. "Being on the other side of it, [it's] different from what I thought it was." However, she loves it and is excited to grow within both her company and within our local APIC chapter.

"It never hurts to ask. Always advocate for what you need."

On how to make work 'work' for you: Ask for alternative work schedules. Marissa states that employers should be aware flexible schedules may help with employee retention and satisfaction, as life/work balance is key for a happy workforce.

Hardest challenge: "Proving to others that I was the subject matter expert," she said. This was especially hard when she was new. When dealing with difficult personalities and roles, it's challenging to stand your ground especially if your experience and education is questioned, she said.

Best piece of professional advice: Never stop learning. The field is constantly changing, so stay updated. Also, don't get stuck and keep expanding your horizons; IPs can be valuable in so many different areas.

Best skill to make a better IP: Public speaking. As IPs, you're constantly communicating with many different audiences—from high-level administration to clinical staff to support staff. Know your audience and how to build rapport with everyone, regardless of role or educational background.

Advice for new IPs: Learn as much as you can, attend any trainings available, and don't be afraid to speak up. Make your education a priority. Even better, let your facility know that your continuing education is a priority. Marissa welcomes any newer IPs to reach out if they are seeking a mentor.

Other fun facts about Marissa:

Best vacation: Aruba—she's been several times!

Hobbies:

Corralling her 2 kids!

Self-care activities:

Monthly massages and making time to see her friends

Favorite food: Pizza, specifically Old Forge-style pizza from Northeastern PA. (It's rectangular with 'cuts' instead of slices, ordered by the 'tray' not the pie.)

Favorite movie: National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation



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