

Compliance Today – March 2019 Meet Judy Ringholz

Vice President of Compliance and Ethics & Chief Compliance Officer, Jackson Health System, Miami, FL and member of HCCA Board of Directors

This interview with Judy Ringholz (judith.ringholz@jhsmiami.org) was conducted in December 2018 by SCCE & HCCA CEO Gerry Zack (gerry.zack@corporatecompliance.org).

GZ: Let's begin with your decision to join the HCCA Board of Directors. You have a very busy job, and you also contribute your time to HCCA in many ways, such as by speaking at conferences. What motivated you to want to join the board?

JR: For as long as I can remember, I've sought leadership roles in school, at work, and within my professional organizations. When I believe that I can help to steer a team in a progressive direction or contribute in some other positive way, I'll often pursue the opportunity to do so.

GZ: You have a fascinating career path, and it started out in nursing. When you began in nursing, did you have any idea you might end up in Compliance?

JR: It's true that my career has been multifaceted. Each prior experience formed the foundation for the next rung of the ladder, and I'm very fortunate to be able to say that I've thoroughly enjoyed every phase. I began an RN diploma program at the age of 18. At that age, my career goal was to be a nursery nurse and care for lots of babies. When I graduated, I followed my instructor's advice and worked on a medical floor for a year so that I would have a solid foundation before working in a specialty area like obstetrics [OB]. That was in 1979. Back then, "compliance," as we know it, did not form the basis for a career path.

GZ: How did your experience in nursing evolve into a desire to go to law school?

JR: When the time came for me to decide on an advanced degree and career path, I viewed my choices as (1) nursing administration, (2) academia and research, or (3) health law. For more than a decade, I worked as a nurse manager, administrator, and "house supervisor," and I knew that I did not want to be a chief nursing officer [CNO] or what is now known as a chief nurse executive [CNE]. I have a great deal of admiration for all of the CNOs/CNEs out there. On a similar note, I was not attracted to academia and research. Many of my colleagues were interested in knowing the etiology behind a patient's medical problem. I absolutely loved taking care of patients, but I was primarily interested in knowing how to make them as comfortable as possible and not doing them any harm. English was always my favorite subject, and I was much more interested in reading and writing than in medical or nursing science.

I recall a particular patient who I cared for in labor and delivery in 1985. She and her husband were both attorneys. I worked 7 p.m.–7 a.m., so I had a lot of time to talk with them and to listen. That night still stands out for me as the time when I made the decision to explore a career in law. In 1992, I saw an ad for a medical malpractice defense firm that was looking for a nurse-paralegal who had experience in OB. After working in that capacity for four years, I went to law school to pursue what had become my passion—to defend providers and healthcare organizations in malpractice litigation.

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