

Compliance Today – November 2018 Meet Lori Strauss

an interview by Gerry Zack

This interview **Lori Strauss** (lori.strauss@stonybrookmedicine.edu) was conducted during the late summer 2018 by SCCE & HCCA CEO **Gerry Zack** (gerry.zack@corporatecompliance.org)

Lori Strauss, Assistant Vice President, Chief Compliance Officer, Stony Brook Medicine, Stony Brook, NY, 2018–2019 President of the SCCE & HCCA Board of Directors

GZ: Thanks for taking the time to be interviewed for Compliance Today. You have a fascinating background, starting out in nursing before entering the compliance profession. What event(s) led to your decision to make this change?

LS: I can't say it was one event that led me to become a compliance professional. There were many events that led me to compliance, and my clinical background has been instrumental to my healthcare compliance career. After doing a few years of bedside nursing in medical-surgical, then critical care when I first graduated from nursing school many moons ago, I became a critical care educator, then a director for a hospital's staff development program, then turned to clinical management of a coronary care unit, then an Emergency department. At this time, I was also working on my master's degree in healthcare administration where I took health law classes that I found very interesting. So much so, that this resulted in me working on the side as an expert witness for nursing malpractice cases. In most of my roles to this point in my career, I was involved in developing policies and procedures and participating in Joint Commission surveys, so I was very regulatory oriented and driven.

After 15 years in Pennsylvania, my husband's job took us to Virginia. I seemed to start over again with my career in Virginia doing home health nursing. I firmly believe that things happen for a reason. Being new to the area, this was a fantastic way to learn my way around, and I gained experience in a new field that was very rewarding. Soon there was an opportunity to manage a new urgent care center that a health system was starting. Having come from managing an Emergency department, I jumped at the opportunity. It was there I first learned physician coding compliance, participating with the urgent care physician in compliance evaluation and management coding, and other compliance trainings.

Because this was the first urgent care center for the organization, I had the opportunity to gain regulatory compliance knowledge while setting up a CLIA-certified moderately complex laboratory, diagnostic radiology, integrating the registration and billing systems, and establishing the medical records, among many other things. After a few years at the urgent care center, I had the opportunity to work in accreditation, assisting to prepare the organization for its upcoming survey, where I worked closely with physician and nursing leaders. I was then hired as the administrator for a clinical specialty department when the organization was going to provider-based clinics. In that role, I gained operational and staffing experience for physician offices and provider-based clinics, a residency program, human subject research, and establishing a compliance program.

The organization had implemented a compliance program with a train-the-trainer concept. I worked closely with the Compliance department in this process, then an opportunity presented in the Compliance department in 2001, and the rest is history. In the Compliance department, I gained experience in assisting to fulfill corporate integrity agreement requirements; developed and presented compliance training; conducted documentation,

coding, and billing audits; prepared and presented reports for senior leadership and the board's Compliance and Audit Committee; oversaw a reportable HIPAA breach involving greater than 500 individuals; among various other invigorating things. In my current role as Chief Compliance Officer for Stony Brook Medicine, I oversee the compliance program for its hospitals, its Physician Practice Plan, and its Health Sciences Schools.

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