

Mariana Catz

When you're a self-described strange cat who's not very conventional, you might have a tendency to apologize for being a maverick. But when you speak with or pore over the resume of Mariana Catz, *ElectronicHealthcare* advisory board member, her passion for life and work shines through even the most technical or mundane topics, clearly making her one vital and charismatic cat.

Growing up in Buenos Aires, Argentina, under a military dictatorship – before coming to Canada in her teenage years – imprinted Mariana with an appreciation for Canadian values and universal healthcare. Her early life also imbued her with a great intensity for everything she does, inconceivably being a bit too honest for my own good career-wise, she says. My passion and temper result from being Latin.

Seen as visionary, a leader and a dedicated mentor, Mariana has a passionate belief that electronic health records (EHRs) can change the face of Medicare in Canada. I believe this is the right time for electronic health records, she says. Medicare needs them, the technology is very much there for us, and the evidence clearly shows that physician order entry systems result in patient safety improvements.

Mariana also appreciates being involved with *ElectronicHealthcare*. This is the only journal in Canada where we have an opportunity to learn what is happening across the country. During my secondment as Chief Adviser on e-Health at Health Canada, I travelled across the country and saw first hand how many of us are struggling with the same issues and how we could benefit greatly by learning from each other.

This is also a basis for her delight in her new work as Vice-President, Knowledge Management/Transfer at Infoway (Canada Health Infoway), the not-for-profit corporation set up by the federal, provincial and territorial governments with one goal being interoperable EHR solutions. Her team will help coalesce the Canadian health community in sharing best practices and general health informatics using virtual communities and knowledge repositories. We will connect Canadians from coast to coast and support them in their efforts to build EHR solutions with local

and international best evidence and experience, she says.

Fluent in Spanish, she's working to become fluent in French and moving from Toronto to Montreal with her new position. With her 15 years of experience in the private and public sectors in Canada, the United States and Europe, she has consulted internationally with the World Health Organization in Geneva, the British Virgin Islands Health Reform Strategy, Uruguay's Ministry of Health on utilization management, and served as a consultant to the Beijing Science Museum and Ministry of Education in China.

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I worked for seven years before I went back to do my Masters in Health Administration (University of Toronto '94), says Mariana, who also has a BA in Psychology, York University ('88). One of my first jobs was in health informatics at the University Health Network, and I was hooked. I started in the area of decision support and after observing the limited information available for decision-making, I soon realized that unless the people who conceptualize data were involved in system design and change management, we were not going to maximize the impact of our systems.

Mariana was the founding CIO and led a team of 100 staff in the merging of four IT, health records and decision support areas at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. She was the first CIO at Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care in Toronto, also establishing their

first information management strategies. Her background includes being a special adviser in Long-Term Care Reform for the Ontario Ministry of Health, Director of Programs at the Canadian Foundation for Economic Education, and Manager of Public Programs at the Ontario Science Centre.

Mariana was the Executive-in-Residence for 2002, University of Victoria School of Health Informatics, and a recipient of the Allan Hay Award for Health Administration Residency at U of T, the Canadian College of Health Services Executives Award for Excellence in Health Administration, and received a U of T Health Administration Graduate Society Literary Award. She's a speaker in demand on health informatics, strategy and policy.

Although it's clear Mariana is a creative interpreter of ideas in her work, is artsy at heart and loves culture in all its forms – especially opera –she's not been able to find the time to do her sculpting and pottery since she started working in healthcare. In my next career, I want to be a chef. I love cooking and do it well and often for friends and family, says Mariana. Unfortunately, my favourite things are reading literature and listening to classical music, which are not very active hobbies to counteract all that gourmandise!

One can only hope the qualities of this Renaissance woman, including her commitment and cultural imperatives, continue to work their way into health informatics. Her kind of creativity and leadership is vital in pushing the system in this new direction.

Bill Pascal

I have a very strong belief that the intelligent application of information technology in the health sector can lead to better care, better access, more efficiency and, more importantly, can become a useful tool to help reform the health system, says Bill Pascal, advisory board member for ElectronicHealthcare. Part of my academic training was in electrical engineering, and I've always kept an interest in how technology can be used to serve the needs of people.

With more than 25 years of senior management experience in the federal government and 10 in the health sector, Bill has done extensive work in federal/provincial relations, contract negotiations, policy development and communications. He recently joined the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) as Chief Technology Officer, leading the development of technology policy directions for the CMA, and helping to shape the overall e-health strategy vision, including products and services for physicians.

I've spent six years working on public policy issues in the health sector and I want to see the successful reform of our health system, he says. IT can facilitate the necessary changes. Bill feels that ElectronicHealthcare has an essential role in this change. We are early into the process of using IT, and one way to help accelerate change is to share ideas and experiences of those who've ventured early into this field, he says. I find the magazine thoughtful, focused on real experiences and it provides a vehicle to share what works and, as important, what does not.

Part of this belief in change comes from his interest in exploring new ideas and searching out those who think about issues differently. I have a belief that once someone thinks they totally understand an issue, they've started down a path of being less useful, he says. Being curious, interested in new ways of doing things, or questioning whether there is a better way of delivering services or products


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keeps one fresh and always looking a little into the future. Bill says this challenges him and serves as a constant reminder that individuals are what is important; not all those other indicators of status we get seduced by.

Most recently, he was with Health Canada in a few roles, such as Director General, Office of Health and the Information Highway, responsible for developing a strategic framework for Canada's health information highway. I sought out that job because I felt my interest and understanding of the health sector and how technology can enable change would allow me an opportunity to put what I believe into practice.

Previous to this, Bill was Director of Planning and Operations for the Privy Council Office and held various positions with Transport Canada. As Executive Director of Celebration '88, he managed a \$12 million communications and marketing program for the federal government's involvement in the XV Olympic Winter Games, and he was Executive Director of Federal Coordination, Secretariat-Expo '86, for the \$125 million program. He has an MA in City Planning ('73) and a BSc in Electrical Engineering ('71) from the University of Manitoba, received his Certified Management Accountant designation in 1980, and is a member of numerous professional associations. With all this professional activity, he realized his personal development lacked a more classical underpinning. Two years ago I committed myself to read 100 books over five years that had nothing to do with work, but were in liberal arts, he says. I've read more than 40 books and am on track to accomplish this goal. I've found it takes unanticipated discipline and a commitment of time, but I am thoroughly enjoying this experience.

On the physical front, Bill has a passion for sports, particularly hockey and golf. He plays hockey a few times a week, admittedly at an increasingly slower pace, and would love to take a year off to bring his handicap down to a single digit, which, he says, might indeed happen. 

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