



**To be a leader; do as the leaders do.  
Learn from the leaders.  
Follow their footsteps.**

We asked Donna Strating, CIO for Capital Health, Edmonton, to retrace her career path and reflect on how she got to her current position.

### **Donna Strating**

Donna Strating is the Chief Information Office (CIO) for Capital Health, Edmonton. Donna has worked in the IT field for over 20 years in the private and public sector, within both the United States and Canada. In her current position, she is responsible for overseeing Capital Health's Information System strategic priorities, goals and initiatives.

She is an active member of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS). Donna is a sought-after speaker at numerous Healthcare Financial Management Association, state medical association and community business and healthcare leadership meetings on subjects related to physician/hospital integration, healthcare reform and managed care.

Early in my career, I would have been described by my mentors as motivated to the extent of sometimes being impatient – very much results-oriented and constantly seeking new challenges and learnings. The characteristics that contribute to both my strengths and weaknesses have not really changed over time but have only coloured with age and maturity. Like many others, my career path leveraged these characteristics.

When I graduated with my Masters Degree in Business over 20 years ago, I did not know what I wanted to do. Therefore, to ensure the most exposure to different roles, businesses and problems, I went into management consulting – specifically healthcare. The consulting environment suited my interests so well that, over my career, I went in and out of management consulting three times, with three different firms, for a total of 50% of my 24 years in healthcare. The best part was that consulting was

not one job but many. This was a great learning ground. Over the consulting term, I was promoted to Partner/Vice-President and worked with hospitals, large healthcare systems, healthcare insurance companies, large physician group practices and, in the dot-com period, non-healthcare companies wanting to capitalize on the healthcare industry. My experiences spanned operations, finance and strategic planning.

Consulting, even though challenging and full of learning opportunities, was project-oriented, and rarely did I have the opportunity to see through to full implementation the fruits of my labour. I felt that to be a better consultant, I also had to be a client. With that goal in mind, and family on the way, I spent the remaining 50% of my career in the healthcare industry doing a variety of different things: as an administrator for several large physician group practices, as financial officer of a hospital and now as CIO with Capital Health in Edmonton.

In reviewing my career path, I wouldn't change anything, because, other than changing industries, I was fortunate to have sampled a little of everything along the way. This has by no means made me an expert in everything, but the value it has brought to my career is perspective on how others view their roles and needs. This perspective has assisted me in doing a better job of translating information technology into business value for Capital Health. A recent and exciting example of this was the development of netCARE, the electronic health record, at Capital Health. Our success in this initiative has not been related to the build of technology but is directly related to the clinicians' acceptance and adoption of it as part of their practice and the contribution it is making to improving patient care.

### Highlights in the Development of netCARE

netCARE is Canada's first integrated region-wide electronic health record (EHR) to connect existing patient information systems located at hospitals and clinics. Built at a cost of \$10 million, it enables physicians in the Edmonton region to have fast and secure access to a wide range of Capital Health service information, including discharge summaries on hospital stays at any site in the region, lab and diagnostic imaging reports and prescription information through the provincial Pharmacy Information Network. Capital Health is one of Canada's largest integrated academic health regions serving a total of 1.6 million people across central and northern Alberta.

*2001:* Capital Health's information management/technology strategy identified regional patient-centric information system as a priority to enhance care.

*December 2001:* Mazankowski recommended development of an electronic health record (EHR) in the Premier's Advisory Council on Health Report.

*January–July 2002:* Requirements for the EHR drafted by team of clinicians, consultants and IS staff.

*October 2002:* Capital Health launched electronic delivery of lab tests directly to electronic medical records (EMR) in physician's clinics.

*October/November 2002:* Recommendations to create a national record of patient information outlined as key priority in Kirby and Romanow Reports.

*November 2002:* Formal tender process began to identify vendor to develop region-wide Electronic Health Record system. Seven proposals received, of which two are shortlisted.

*December 2002:* Canada Health Infoway announced that it would partner with Capital Health on the building of a patient registry for a national EHR.

*January 2003:* Finalists made presentations to functional and technical review teams. More than 90% of participating clinicians supported selection of Central Station, a consortium of five computer system companies – Sierra Systems, Orion Systems International, Quovadx, Hewlett-Packard and Oracle Corporation – to develop the EHR.

*March–June 2003:* Capital Health signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Sierra Systems to start contract negotiations with the consortium. Design and development began in June.

*February 2004:* Staggered pilots of Electronic Health Record begin. Sites include an emergency department, acute care unit, outpatient clinics and community clinics.

*April 2004:* Staged region-wide rollout begins.

## Summer Institute in Nursing Informatics

Where: Baltimore, Maryland - University of Maryland School of Nursing

When: 7/21/2004 – 7/24/2004

For more information: [www.nursing.umaryland.edu/informatics](http://www.nursing.umaryland.edu/informatics)

In an era of limited resources, increased patient care needs, and advanced technologic innovations, the requirements for information and the opportunity to support continuity of patient care has never been greater. Informatics offers a means to educate, provide decision support, and enhance patient care and organizational systems. At the Summer Institute in Nursing Informatics, experts in nursing and healthcare informatics will present seminars on informatics practice across the continuum of care: current information technologies, information system selections, implementation, and evaluation, strategic planning for healthcare systems, and use of Web-based technology in distance education for health care providers and consumers. Four pre- and post conferences will be offered at levels from beginner to advanced. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to observe software demonstrations, attend how-to sessions on informatics processes, and network with colleagues in the field.

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