



Susan McClain, BSN RN CCM CPHQ
Quality Specialist, NCH Healthcare System, Naples, FL

Susan McClain started her healthcare career as a bedside nurse in the orthopedic unit at The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, NJ, later becoming a visiting nurse for Valley Home and Community, a component of the Valley Health System. After many years as a clinician, McClain transitioned into case management, serving in various positions at institutions across New Jersey.

It was while McClain was working as a case manager for Shore Medical Center in Somers Point, NJ, that she took her first position in healthcare quality, becoming the center's performance improvement coordinator.

"One day I was standing by the elevator looking at job postings, and there was an opening in the quality department," she says. "I was always interested in improving processes, even as an undergraduate. And soon after I started my new position, I thought, 'This is where I belong.' It was what I had been looking for."

In her role as performance improvement coordinator, McClain was responsible for developing action plans to improve performance on core measures sets; ensuring compliance with The Joint Commission standard requirements and National Patient Safety Goals; educating staff on regulations, standards, and center-specific performance improvement initiatives; and coordinating her center's contributions to the National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators®. This experience prepared her for her current position as a quality specialist for the NCH Healthcare System, in Naples, FL.

Today, McClain concentrates on her institution's orthopedic certifications and developing process improvements for that area. She analyzes data and develops action plans designed to improve compliance with The Joint Commission accreditation standards, as well as Florida Hospital Association Hospital Engagement Network indicators, exposing her to nearly every area of her healthcare system.

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"I work with every department in the organization: physicians, the lab, and the nurses at the bedside, to name a few," she says. "To me, quality is a team approach. Everybody is collaborating to make improvements." McClain's role is to organize these efforts by facilitating teams, offering guidance and education on improvement methodologies, and providing tools to help teams create or redesign processes to provide safe, high-quality care. The paradigm shift to well care rather than illness-based care is driving healthcare quality professionals (HQPs) to take a greater role both within and outside of their institutions. "As healthcare changes, HQPs' roles and responsibilities are expanding outside their traditional roles," she says. "HQPs are increasingly working within population health management and value-based payment models and partnering with entities across the care continuum, such as public health [organizations], physicians' offices, and insurers."

These rapidly evolving roles mean HQPs must continuously expand their skill set and knowledge base. McClain has accomplished this by earning several professional credentials, including the Certified Case Manager (CCM) and the Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality® (CPHQ). She also is pursuing her master's of science in nursing (MSN) in healthcare quality from The George Washington University, a degree she expects to receive in 2017. McClain says that certifications and degrees like these show potential employers and colleagues alike that you are invested in and knowledgeable about the field, while also making yourself more marketable.



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