

PAHCOM National Advisory Board



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“I was struggling to discover what I ultimately wanted to do when our nurse practitioner found a brochure in the trash can in one of our physicians’ offices. The brochure spoke of a professional association for health care office managers, and, knowing my struggle, she thought that I might find it interesting. The association named on the cover had a very lengthy name that I did not recognize. It had an acronym for that lengthy name that I couldn’t even pronounce. And it was specifically directed to managers in solo and small group practices.

What caught my attention was seeing the words “health care management” and “professional” together. I was astounded, as I had never viewed my job in a small group practice as a career, much less a professional career. The brochure spoke of the need for professionals in health care management to pursue educational opportunities, to network with their peers, and to certify their health care management skills. These were concepts that I never imagined applied in my world.

The brochure also spoke of a national conference in my hometown within the next few weeks. But what interested me more than the conference was the opportunity to take the Certified Medical Manager exam. Given my personal struggle, I felt that taking the exam would help me find answers. If I passed, I would stay in health care management; if I failed, it was time to move on. I quickly joined PAHCOM and signed up for the exam.

Because time was short, the study guide arrived only a few days before the exam. There was no time to study. On the morning of the exam, the study guide lay on the passenger seat of my car, and I flipped through the questions at each stoplight. When I arrived, the hotel lobby was bustling with pre-conference activity. I found the assigned room and sat for the exam with about a dozen other managers, none of whom I knew.

After the test, I returned to the lobby. A steady stream of conference attendees were arriving and greeting one another like long-lost friends. I had worked in health care management for years in my

hometown, and knew no other managers well enough to greet any of them in that manner. Sponsors were setting up their displays with a variety of goods and services that piqued my interest. Familiar health care phrases, our own special jargon, caught my ear. I suddenly realized that this conference was very special and that this was where I needed and wanted to be.

I approached the registration desk and asked if it was too late to attend. PAHCOM's staff offered a warm welcome and encouraged me to take in everything the conference had to offer. Without hesitation, I called my office to let them know that I was not just out for the day; I was out for the rest of the week.

Every minute of my first conference was valuable. On the first day, PAHCOM Founder Richard Blanchette welcomed first-time attendees and presented information about the association. He spoke of his Master's thesis on decision-making in solo and small group practices. From his research, he learned that there were very talented people running these practices. They had a wealth of experience, but no way to validate it. They worked in isolation from one another, and because of that, were continually re-inventing the wheel. If they could just connect with one another, they could share that knowledge and benefit from it. From that idea, PAHCOM was born. To me it seemed so profound that someone recognized what we do and what we accomplish for our organizations!

My head was full of fresh ideas by the time the conference ended, and my life richer because of the people I met. I was one of more than 300 attendees at this conference, yet no one was a stranger from the minute I arrived. And it's been that way ever since."