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Georgia's Technology Connection

The news, insights and trends at the
intersection of Georgia's innovation and
technology communities

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Network

TECH-CONNECTED CARE

The Health
and Wellness
Innovation
Issue

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WHO'S WHO
IN GA
HEALTH IT

TECHIES HEAD
TO ATLANTA'S
WEST MIDTOWN



WHERE GEORGIA LEADS

Health Information Technology

A JOURNEY IN HEALTH IT

Dr. Denise W. Hines,
DHA, PMP, FHIMSS

I grew up watching television shows like Quincy, M.E. and General Hospital, so I knew at an early age that I wanted to be in healthcare to serve and help others. My mother was a nurse, one of my sisters was a respiratory therapist, and my oldest sister was a medical office assistant, so the influence of healthcare was all around me.

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Dr. Hines represents HIMSS on Capitol Hill during 2017 HIT Week.
Source: GAHIN

When I was 18, I started working as a nursing assistant, taking care of patients, giving them baths, turning them, changing linens, showering and shaving them. It was backbreaking work, but it was very rewarding. But there was one problem – I get squeamish around blood. That fact led me into a career in health information technology. I did administrative work for a home health agency, and then went to work for First Data Corporation.

Part of my job was following up with people about their past due medical bills, and that's when I first realized something was not right with our healthcare system.

I then joined IBM and worked on their electronic medical records system, which ran into problems with interoperability – a problem that we still haven't solved as an industry. In 1999, I joined Southern Regional Health System to help it navigate potential Y2K issues.

It was such an interesting experience; if something had a computer chip in it, I knew about it. I set up contingency plans for potential problems if the ambulances couldn't run or stop lights didn't work. We didn't know what was going to happen!

Developing Georgia's HIT Structure

After working with Southern Regional, I worked with the Georgia Department of Community Health to help it develop state plans for health IT. It was a very interesting, exciting time, and my projects included:

- Participation on Georgia's HIE Strategic and Operational Plan writing team, serving as the co-chair of the HIE Governance Committee;
- Launching Georgia's first comprehensive health information transparency and HIE website;
- Serving as the first Executive Director for the GA Health Information Technology Advisory Board;
- Creating Georgia's two-, five-, & 10-year strategic plans for health information technology; and
- Creating and implementing the Georgia HIE Grants Awards Program that awarded \$1.8 million in grants in the first and second years.



AT A GLANCE

A nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a healthier Georgia by facilitating the use and secure exchange of electronic health information so providers have the information they need at the point of care.

Established In: **2009**

Headquarters: **Midtown Atlanta**

Connected Providers: **15,545**

Year to Date Queries: **730,920**

Year to Date Direct Transactions: **368,993**

Patient Records Indexed: **28M+**

WHERE GEORGIA LEADS

Health Information Technology

In 2011, I realized that I was spending at least an hour a day commuting and that was time I could be spending with my family. I made the decision to start my own business, eHealth Services Group. Moving out of that structured corporate environment to work for myself took a certain amount of faith, courage and trust. Now, I welcome the opportunity to share my journey with other women who might be interested in venturing out into something less structured or traditional.

Supporting Healthcare Providers

eHealth Services Group provides services that assist healthcare providers – large and small – with the implementation and successful use of HIT systems. eHealth Services Group works with healthcare constituencies to optimize the benefits of technology, and support the delivery of quality care. One of our first projects was for the HIT Regional Extension Center at Morehouse School of Medicine. I was responsible for overseeing and managing the marketing and outreach recruitment of more than 5,200 healthcare providers, and 56 critical access and rural hospitals, assisting these providers in meeting meaningful use requirements and qualifying for the CMS EHR incentive program.

In 2013, I was named Executive Director of the Georgia Health Information Network (GaHIN) and eHealth Services Group was engaged to provide the staffing needed to support the non-profit's mission and activities. GaHIN is a health information exchange (HIE), connecting everyone in a medical community – physicians, hospitals, state agencies, EMRs and even schools.

Our vision at GaHIN is “to create a healthier Georgia through the use and exchange of electronic health informa-



tion to improve patient-centered health care, increase efficiencies and improve the health of the state's entire population.”

We have connected GaHIN to two national networks for information exchange, made Georgia one of the first state HIEs to connect directly to other states, and created connections with five state agencies and two national agencies. We have also spurred participation in the HIE by Grady, CHOA, Emory, Gwinnett and numerous other state hospitals and healthcare providers.

HIT is such an interesting field, which has already made huge strides forward, but much remains to be done. I believe that the benefits of health information technology, such as personalized medicine and population health, are just beginning to be realized, and that we have an obligation to ensure all patients, including those in underserved and rural communities, have access to these innovations.

The Evolution of HIT

One of my “passion projects” is working to elevate the role of women and minorities in HIT. Traditionally, HIT has been a male-dominated industry due largely to the fact that women haven't

been encouraged to enter information technology fields. We're now seeing more women enter the field as STEM education spreads at all levels of education.

I want to help women in HIT receive validation of their true value to our industry, and I hope that my achievements inspire them to turn around and support other women. We all need to talk about our journeys, successes and challenges.

It's been interesting to see the change in the people attending the HIMSS Conference over the years. Not only has the attendance grown exponentially (approximately 40,000 people attend the national conference), but now you are seeing more women and minorities attending the conference, which I believe reflects positively on increasing diversity in the industry. We still have a long way to go, but it's encouraging to see progress being made. 🚀

Dr. Denise W. Hines, DHA, PMP, FHIMSS, is CEO of eHealth Services Group and Executive Director of the Georgia Health Information Network (GaHIN), the state-wide health information exchange (HIE) for Georgia. She is the 2017-2018 North America Board Chair for the Health Information & Management Systems Society (HIMSS).