



KATHY LAVELLE

**VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE &
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WOODSTOCK HOSPITAL**

Kathy Lavelle was in high school, working a part-time job driving a Zamboni and mowing lawns for her town's parks and recreation department, when she realized she needed to think more seriously about her future. At the suggestion of a family friend, she arranged to spend time at the local hospital's ultrasound department and a cancer centre, and decided to enroll in a Bachelor of Health Science program at Western University. There, realizing she was one of 5000 students, she decided having a specialization would help her career. When she heard the head of CHIMA talking about the university's new program in health information management and the opportunities it offered, she moved into that area of specialization.

"As I got into the field of informatics, I began to realize how important that information was to decision-making, knowing what was going on in the system, how information flowed through a hospital and influenced patients and decision-makers, it intrigued me."

Kathy worked for the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and then as a director of health information management for five years, and as a consultant while also pursuing a Masters in Health Administration. Throughout her various roles, she began to focus on using clinical data to drive funding, and became more interested in the finance side of health so she went back to school to pursue a Chartered Professional Accountant designation.

In August 2016, Kathy passed her final CPA exams, was offered a CFO position at the Woodstock Hospital where she had been working as the director of health information, and then found out she was pregnant with her second child.

But this didn't slow her down. While acknowledging that HIM professionals don't directly save lives, she argues that "Everything I do directly impacts patient care. We are the behind-

the-scenes that holds it all together.” She says, “I love the job I’m in now. It’s the right place for me – it has enough detail to keep me grounded but enough bigger picture that makes every day interesting.”

And while Kathy is no longer in a direct HIM role, she says her heart is still in CHIMA. “I’m one of very few CFOs with a health information background but I think it is tremendously beneficial because clinical data is driving a lot of the funding.” Unlike some CFOs, she does not see coding or data analysis as simply an administrative function, but sees it as vital. She places a continual focus on her hospital’s data quality efforts in order to maximize funding for their patients.

And just as Kathy herself benefitted from meeting mentors and future bosses from her time on the CHIMA board, she encourages young HIM professionals, advising them to see and experience as much as they can within their field.

Practising what she preaches, on the morning her son was born, Kathy went into her office and felt satisfied to be able to finish off some year-end details before going upstairs in the hospital where she gave birth only a couple of hours later.

