

MEET A MEMBER

After 11 years in pediatric, CDI gave her a new home

Lourdes Albino Cacanindin, MD, CCDS, is a CDI specialist at Sutter Health–Sutter Delta Medical Center in Antioch, California, and is a member of the California chapter of ACDIS.

ACDIS: How long have you been in the CDI field?

Cacanindin: It's been the most rewarding eight and a half years since 2010, when I was hired by Sutter Delta Medical Center as their CDI reviewer. Before that, I was a Philippine board-certified doctor and practiced pediatrics in Manila. I graduated in 1987, magna cum laude, in pre-med from the University of Santo Tomas College of Science, went on to medical school at UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, and graduated in 1991, passing the medical board exam that same year.

I was a pediatric clinical practitioner affiliated in six major hospitals in the Greater Manila area until 2005. Then I became the head of the department of pediatric and health coordinator at Martinez Memorial Hospital, before eventually moving here and getting into CDI.

ACDIS: Why did you get into this line of work?

Cacanindin: Through God's grace! We finally decided to stay in my mother-in-law's home in San Francisco for good in May 2005 to take care of my husband's aging parents. I passed the four steps of the United States Medical Licensing Exam but didn't want to do the residency training outside California. I did a year of clinical observation in a pediatric clinic, then struggled to get into the matching program here.

Then, we got tired of the city, and my husband suggested it was time to buy a new house in the East Bay in 2010 when the housing market was really great. When my father-in-law died in November 2010, we went back to Chattanooga to stay in the city on weekends. Then, I was referred to Sutter Delta Medical Center's CEO at the time, by my new home and car insurance agent who happened to be one of the members of the board of trustees of Sutter Delta and the president of the Delta Memorial Hospital foundation. He invited me to come

and see their medical institution the following week and



offered me the job as a CDI reviewer. The rest is history!

ACDIS: What has been your biggest challenge?

Cacanindin: My biggest challenge, when I started, was getting hold of the chart. We did not have Epic in 2010, so I suggested staying on the floors while I read the charts in the doctor's quarters. I was able to chat with the providers and do verbal queries at the same time. I used neon orange-colored paper for my written queries so that our doctors could locate them among the piles of paper in the patient's chart. The funny part was, when I went up to the floors, I could see some doctors going to the opposite direction to avoid me. It was like a mouse seeing a cat. But, I got some help from the telemetry nurses. They called my extension or my cell when they saw the doctors in my "most wanted list."

Once a particularly rude provider asked, "Where do you get those differentials? Google?" So, I said, "Yes! I can get more precise diagnoses from Google than from your chart." And said it with a big smile.

ACDIS: What has been your biggest reward?

Cacanindin: My biggest reward was to be respected as a medical colleague doing another line of work and be recognized for my CDI efforts by our CFO. When I was hired to do this job, I didn't introduce myself as a Philippine board-certified medical doctor to the rest of the medical staff, but as a CDI reviewer. Then, after three months at work, the CEO introduced me as a doctor who had practiced pediatrics in the Philippines for more than 10 years. After that meeting, I received some more respect and more acceptance for my queries.

And the best comment I got was from our CFO at the time, Julie Peterson, who told my husband during our hospital Christmas party, "I'm glad to see you, and I would like you to know that we want to clone your wife." Being a witty Navy veteran and a financial expert, my husband replied, "Great, I'll give you the clone, I'll bring my wife home, then you give me two checks."

Whenever I saw Julie in the hallways, she always recognized my good work and updated me about our case-mix index. Recently, I was invited to our inpatient council to collaborate with them on physician education with our chief medical officer and my manager, the director of CDI. I already did some presentations with one of our surgical providers last October and he shared it with his group. Then, last November, I did a presentation with one of our hospitalists, who also shared it with his hospitalist group. Since then, I've seen significant improvement in the documentation. We are now preparing one for our larger hospitalist group.

ACDIS: How has the field changed since you began working in CDI?

Cacanindin: There has been great progress in the CDI field. I was already familiar with ICD-10 from when I was the insurance coordinator and head of our pediatric department in Martinez Hospital. I used ICD-10 diagnosis codes in my practice, which is why I was so surprised to know that clinicians here still used ICD-9 codes. Before I was hired, I took an ACDIS Boot Camp in Fremont, California, with Shannon McCall and immediately became an ACDIS member. When I was hired in April, Sutter Delta wanted to send me to the Boot

Camp, so when they found out I'd already done that, they reimbursed everything I incurred for that training.

I passed the CCDS exam on April 9, 2012, after two years at Delta. CDI has changed a lot since back then in terms of getting a hold of charts, paper queries, and waiting for the replies to those queries, which were sometimes misplaced. When the EHR was introduced to Delta, it was like a heaven-sent application for a CDI specialist with a flair for computers like me. Reviewing the charts was a breeze and sending queries became a lot easier with templates we could pull out in seconds. Then, the introduction of ICD-10 was the best thing for me since I was familiar already with those codes.

What I love the most in CDI is the constant change and updates. It keeps my brain's neurons constantly synapsing. I love to read and learn continuously.

ACDIS: Can you mention a few of the "gold nuggets" you've received through ACDIS?

Cacanindin: My "one thing" from ACDIS isn't just one thing. I learned tons of great information about the healthcare industry through ACDIS. I received a lot of medical knowledge about health information management that I shared with my alma mater, through our conferences with the University of Santo Tomas Medical Alumni Association in America, where I am a current member of the board of directors. I also encouraged our alumni to try out CDI, and I introduced my medical sorority sisters from Theta Lambda Phi to ACDIS and encouraged them to become members. I've met a lot of important and knowledgeable people and kept a few as close friends. I learn a lot from doctors when I attend the forum for clinicians during the annual conference. I intend to grow in this field and share its impact.

ACDIS: How many ACDIS conferences have you been to? What are your favorite memories?

Cacanindin: I've been to every ACDIS conference since 2011. We were asked to submit a comment about the impact of the conference during my first year of attendance, then to my surprise, it was published in the 2012 ACDIS Conference brochure and then again in the 2013 brochure. The brochure says on the last page what previous attendees said about the event. I'm quoted as saying, "I am more confident to educate our



physicians after listening to all the updates and ICD-10 information I gathered from this very excellent conference.” My colleagues were teasing me as a “two-timer!”

My favorite memories are with the people I meet each year: new colleagues and friends who enjoy the company and savor the knowledge we learn each year. My group of CDI friends has grown bigger and closer to my heart. I’m glad one of my co-workers, Sandra Christensen-Waldear, has gone with me for two years. We each presented posters last year. I’m hoping to present another poster this year. I’m already looking forward to the Florida ACDIS conference. My husband and I are planning to drive to Orlando with our Berkshire RV.

ACDIS: What piece of advice would you offer to a new CDI specialist?

Cacanindin: You should love digging into the chart for clinical evidence and learn to love the challenges you will encounter daily because they will make your confidence level higher once you overcome those tasks. Take it one great query at a time. Count your blessings that you are in the most notable profession and you are creating a great impact for your institution. Share what you learned and make worthy discussions and accept good arguments. Learn from your mistakes and ask for help when necessary.

ACDIS: If you could have any other job, what would it be?

Cacanindin: Probably a college professor. I’d love to teach and learn, but I hate lesson planning like what my mom used to do. She was an elementary school teacher when we were growing up and taught me a lot about being academically strong. She’s enjoying her life with my dad and two sisters in the Philippines.

ACDIS: What was your first job?

Cacanindin: I helped my mom manage our own mini grocery store in Malinta, Valenzuela City. I was the cashier after school hours. Everybody calls my mom Nonie “Mrs. Love” because the name of our store was LOVE—L for Lourdes, O for Orchids, and VE for Venus—her three precious daughters’ names.

ACDIS: Can you tell us about a few of your favorite things?

- **Vacation spots:** Kauai. It’s the best island in Hawaii for me.
- **Hobby:** Reading or watching movie marathons with my husband on Saturday nights.
- **Non-alcoholic beverage:** Jasmine tea.
- **Foods:** Adobo, Lumpia, and Pancit and any Sinigang or Nilaga. And, warm soup when I’m not feeling well.
- **Activity:** Travelling with SHIRE (our RV), our home away from home.

ACDIS: Tell us about your family and how you like to spend your time away from CDI.

Cacanindin: We have a very busy social life. As one of our dear friends always says, “I can’t catch up with you guys. You’re hardly home!” Well, my husband just retired, and we want to enjoy life while we can. We always spend time with family and friends, and we love to invite people over whenever we’re home. We love to celebrate life, and it keeps us feeling young. You have to tell us in advance if you want to invite us somewhere because our calendar fills up fast. We’re moving around with Shire all the time when we have time. 🌸