

**Ainslie****Manager, Health Information Services - Mental Health
Eastern Health****Why I choose the HIM course**

When I was choosing my subjects for Year 12, I knew that I wanted to work in the health industry, but was not sure exactly where. So I chose a range of subjects that would allow me to apply for health-related courses at university – English, health, maths and sciences.

When it came time for VTAC applications, I stumbled across a course that was in the health industry, but did not require clinical contact with patients – Health Information Management – at La Trobe University. With medical terminology, anatomy & physiology, management, and health informatics (health IT) being core units – a wide range of topics that I thought covered just about everything that was of interest to me.

What I enjoyed about the course

I found the professional placements invaluable as they gave me a much greater understanding, not only because they allowed students to have hands-on experience in the field, but also because they were a great networking resource, and provided practical assistance.

After my Year 2 placement, I was lucky enough to get casual work at the Peter James Centre, under the supervision of the Chief Health Information Manager, who was a great mentor to me in my endeavours to become a Health Information Manager. I worked in many roles as a casual, from assistant work and audio-typing in specialist medical clinics, to executive assistance, reception, admissions clerk, basic clinical coding, and Mental Health administration. I found this gave me a great overview of how a healthcare network runs, and I landed a job as the Deputy Health Information Manager when I graduated.

My first professional HIM job as a new grad

This role provided me with a wide range of activities and experiences, which included system administration and coordination of the state-wide information system for mental health – the Client Management Interface (CMI). It was here that I discovered my passion for Mental Health. I decided that Mental Health was an avenue that I would love to pursue, and got involved in as many activities as possible to give me the greatest understanding of the system.

My current position

I am employed as the Health Information Services Manager for Mental Health across the entire Eastern Health network. My favourite aspect of the job is the fact that there is so much variety in this HIM role. I get to liaise with a wide variety of people of different levels and disciplines, from Program Managers and Executives, to Team Leaders and Administrative staff right across the network.

Another aspect of my job which I find exciting is that there is always a project on the go – from development of training manuals and hands-on training for the CMI; to integrating psychiatric and medical records; to setting up a tracking system. I complete all Freedom of Information requests for Mental Health at Box Hill Hospital, develop and manage data quality activities to 'clean up' the system, and undertake classification/clinical coding of the Mental Health records.

Great opportunities in Mental Health Information Management

There are many great opportunities for advancement in the Mental Health area, as it is an ever-growing industry with a severe shortage of Health Information Managers. It is a specialist Health Information Management role which means good pay and flexibility. There are many avenues a Health Information Manager could take in the Mental Health stream, from data analysis and clinical indicator reporting, to policy and strategic planning, and system development at the Department of Human Services.

I hope to one day work in the Office of Health Information Systems at the Department of Human Services in system development for Mental Health services, to work towards developing a system that is both administrative and clinical in nature – in essence, a state-wide electronic mental health record.