



12th ACDIS Conference in Orlando: Simply Magical

By *Melissa Varnavas*

There was that castle in the distance, of course. You know the one. It's started so many animated feature films over the years, and purportedly housed sweet Cinderella once the glass slipper finally slid into its proper place on her tiny foot. And while many of the more than 1,700 attendees of the 2019 ACDIS Conference did waltz past her dreamlike abode and meander through the parks at Walt Disney World, there were more than enough magical moments to be had right on the conference campus of the Gaylord Palms hotel and resort in Kissimmee.

The Gaylord Palms is a unique resort in its own right. It features a biosphere of botanical gardens and luxurious appointments, a steakhouse in a tree house, and a seafood restaurant on a "ship" that juts out into a bay filled with stingrays and other fish. You can even feed baby alligators. Turn another corner, though, and you'd

find yourself amidst a sea of a different sort—Charting the Course (which was this year's conference theme) through a seeming ocean of purple and orange-clad attendees navigating the waters of a host of networking and educational opportunities.

Puppies, pancakes, possibilities

Even before guests arrived at the event, the networking had begun on the conference app and social media. These platforms allow folks to ask questions of fellow attendees, get a feel for what others are looking forward to, and have a little fun while packing their suitcases. In years past, attendees have posted pictures of their mani-pedis (some even with the ACDIS logo), their hairdresser appointments, and even their pre-conference shopping sprees. This year the app was filled with pictures of people's pets, many of whom were sadly trying to cram themselves into their owners' suitcases, not wanting to miss an opportunity to attend ACDIS.

The conference app also offers a set of discussion groups focused on the 2020 IPPS proposed rule, first-time attendees, managers/directors, local chapters, and other areas. The app serves as a great tool to craft a schedule of sessions to attend, get instant reminders on upcoming events, and take notes on conference presentations. This year, new app features included an opportunity to share virtual business cards—making it easy to remember the name of the individual you spoke to with the amazing outpatient ideas—and a scavenger hunt through the ACDIS conference space.

The conference opens every year with a welcome reception in the exhibit hall. This gives early arrivals an opportunity to register for the main event, grab a drink with colleagues, and get a sneak peek at various vendors' offerings. Although no pooches smuggled their way into the conference educational sessions, the exhibit hall did have a visit from a few Nuance-employed

therapy dogs so ACDIS attendees could spend some quality time petting the dogs and not missing their own pets back home.

And therapy dogs notwithstanding, there were plenty of amazing activities throughout the exhibit hall. Iodine had a planetarium where attendees could relax and charge their cell phones, and they gave away CDI-inspired t-shirts, screen printed and made to order. 3M brought several artists to create caricature luggage tags and also sponsored the closing night reception. Title sponsor TrustHCS invited Dan-cakes back for a second year and sponsored one of the lunches. Dan-cakes has been featured on several television news and entertainment programs for their unique ability to turn any photo into a pancake.

Despite all the wonderful gifts exhibitors provided ACDIS attendees, perhaps the most meaningful were the insights they offered. These experts came to the national conference armed with a global perspective on CDI expansion across the country and the tools to help with those expansion efforts. Time and time again, conference goers would come back to the exhibit hall space to share a snack and pearls of wisdom gleaned from the session they'd just attended, and exhibitors were all excited to share what they'd learned as well.

Ideas, inspiration, innovation

While Disney may be known worldwide for its Imagineering, the 12th ACDIS Conference was memorable for its plethora of ideas, inspiration,

and innovation. With more than 60 sessions and 120 speakers across six educational tracks for a variety of experience levels, there was something for everyone in each time slot of the day.

This year's conference included a new track called "Idea Laboratory," which brought speakers from different perspectives together to share the stage for 30 minutes each. Some of these sessions covered CDI and population health, CDI and its role in the healthcare revenue cycle, and CDI efforts and outcomes related to healthcare research. There was also a track called "Innovation & Expansion" in which CDI experts explored cutting-edge advancements such as concurrent coding, second-level chart reviews, data analytics, remote CDI, and more. This year, too, ACDIS expanded its traditional management track to include sessions that offered tools for personal and professional advancement.

And while repeat attendees may have initially felt comfortable with their general knowledge of common concerns included in the "Clinical & Coding" track, session speakers managed to offer new insight into ongoing trouble spots.

For example, the session "GLIM: The New Malnutrition Clinical Criteria and Implications for the CDI Profession" included one of the co-authors of the new global malnutrition criteria, Charlene Compher, PhD, RD, LDN, FASPEN. Compher spoke with noted CDI expert Richard D. Pinson, MD, FACP, CCS, author of the CDI Pocket Guide,

ACDIS CONFERENCE BY THE NUMBERS

- 2.5 days
- 1,700 attendees
- 6 educational tracks
- 60 educational sessions
- Roughly 120 speakers/presenters
- 6 professional awards
- 40 exhibitors/vendors
- 25 core ACDIS staff

about the impetus behind the most recent consensus statement. One session attendee wrote, "I emailed a dietitian friend of mine about how great this [session] was, and before the conference was finished, she said she wanted to connect with me to help educate the providers she works with. Wow!"

Also in this track, Rhoda Chism, BSN, RN, CCDS, and Laura White, MHA, presented "Untangling the Sepsis Web: Surviving Sepsis in 2019." During their presentation, the speakers explored how interconnected the clinical, documentation, and coding worlds need to be in order to not only abide by changing clinical practices, but also effectively align the goals of CDI, coding, and quality outcomes. Chism and White also explored payer and regulatory governance related to sepsis clinical definitions and code assignment, and they gave attendees a blueprint to take home to build or enhance their own hospital's sepsis processes. This was "hands down the best explanation of the whole

confusing thing we call sepsis. I plan on sharing this information with my staff,” wrote an attendee in her evaluation notes.

Take-home inspiration was a frequently mentioned topic among attendees who took the ACDIS post-conference survey. One attendee called the conference “very pertinent to our next steps,” and another said, “Excellent, [this conference] had a lot of doable steps to revitalize/grow a CDI program.”

The keynote speakers on Day 1 and Day 3 of the conference brought inspiration to the annual event. Natalie Stavas, MD, took the stage on Day 1 to kick things off. On April 15, 2013, Stavas was running the Boston Marathon when two bombs detonated at the finish line. With only a moment’s pause, she ran into the fray and began to treat those who were wounded in the attack. Her experiences that day led her to consider how humans deal with chaos, stress, and challenges. Building on the research of Nobel Prize winner Elizabeth Blackburn, AC, FRS, FAA, FRSN—who discovered that people who view a challenging situation as an opportunity, rather than a stress, can actually prolong their lives—Stavas encouraged attendees to embrace challenges and run into the chaos.

“When we’re faced with adversity,” she said, “we only really have two options: We can run toward it, or away from it. People who choose to take actions have strong synapses [in] the brain. If you seek out

these opportunities [to run toward challenges], you’ll be the kind of person who takes action when called upon, or better yet, when you’re not called upon.”

While something may seem impossible, Stavas told attendees that changing your perspective shrinks seemingly insurmountable challenges to scalable ones. You may not see the immediate effect of your actions—much like the many first responders at the marathon bombing, who were devoted to individual victims and unaware of the many lives saved in their midst—but your actions will make a difference, both in your own life and the lives of others around you.

“Never underestimate how important you are,” Stavas told the crowd. “Never underestimate how important your actions are.”

On the final day of the conference, speaker Joe Tye took the stage to share advice and challenges for seeing a lion in your mirror, overcoming negative self-talk, becoming a better human, and positively changing the culture around you.

“Cultures don’t change until people change,” he said. “And people will not change unless you provide them with the tools to do so.”

Tye then walked attendees through seven promises—one for each day of the week—and encouraged them to say those promises four times per day, taking up roughly one minute of their time per day. Each promise encourages individuals to improve their outlooks, ask for help, and ultimately

become better people. After a certain period of time, he said, those promises will take hold and become reality.

“We will definitely be initiating this in our leadership team,” wrote one ACDIS attendee. “I have already sent the info to my team!”

Teamwork, time, tales to tell

Speakers, vendors, staff, and attendees all left ACDIS with tales to tell and experiences to share with their colleagues back home. At the center of every conference, however, lives ACDIS’ core mission to “serve as the premier healthcare community for clinical documentation specialists, providing a medium for education, professional growth, program recognition, and networking.”

Doing so takes teamwork. From those who put forth their thoughtful proposals to the conference committee who evaluates and chooses the presenters; from the core ACDIS team to the supportive events, marketing, sales, and production teams; without all of these collaborators, the conference wouldn’t be possible. Even the attendees who come with open hearts and minds to absorb as much learning as possible bring forward their experiences and love of the profession to make this event one of the best in the healthcare industry—over and over again.

Believe it or not, the ACDIS 2020 Conference Committee has been selected, and the [call for presentation proposals is open](#). We hope you’ll consider offering your insight. See you next year in Vegas! 🎉



