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new jersey chapter

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Who's Who in the Chapter 2024-2025

Chapter Website <https://www.hfma.org/chapters/region-3/new-jersey/>

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OBJECTIVE

Our objective is to provide members with information regarding Chapter and national activities, with current and useful news of both national and local significance to healthcare financial professionals and as to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information.

The President's View . . .

Happy Holidays to our HFMA Family!

Truly in the Holiday spirit, I am grateful for all of you who helped make our NJ and Metro Philadelphia Annual Institute a resounding success. With over 450 attendees and a full roster of corporate sponsors and partners, there were countless opportunities to network, attend topical education sessions, and have fun rocking out to The Nerds! True story that our Chapter has a member with a direct connection to this legendary NJ band. What a wonderful way to celebrate all things HFMA and all things Jersey!

This year's Institute was especially monumental for our Chapter. We partnered with the Philadelphia Eagles Autism Foundation ("EAF") as our charity event beneficiary and did something special. I set a goal to raise \$10,000 for EAF and we did it! Your support raised \$10,130 in total and BESLER contributed the balance to bring our Chapter donation total to \$25,000! What an amazing accomplishment and I appreciate everyone's interest and enthusiasm for Wednesday's Charity event. Our Chapter has never provided this much financial support to a single charity. Congratulations and thank you!



Jonathan Besler

Another goal that we had for the Institute was to "get back to pre-COVID". For many of us, COVID seems well in the review mirror, however, we all can appreciate how things have changed. Our Annual Institute attendance had suffered as a result, and our Annual Institute committee was committed to raising attendance to pre-COVID levels. This year, we welcomed over 450 attendees, which is the highest attendance level in over half a decade. Let's keep this trend going for this year and beyond.

Our annual pizza and Holiday party was held on November 18 in Metuchen. It was a wonderful opportunity to get together casually and catch up before the New Year. Thank you to all who joined us and if you weren't able to attend, hopefully we will see you at ALL of our upcoming events:

- Post Holiday, Ditch the Diet Social at Chickie's & Pete's (Marlton) on January 13; and,
- Patient Access Services and Patient Financial Services Committees Annual Meeting at the APA Woodbridge on January 22; and,
- "standing-room-only" Annual Women's Leadership event on April 22

Come join us, come see what HFMA can offer you, come be part of what we are building together. I am so proud of all that we have been able to accomplish together during this Chapter year. Our Board, our Committee Chairs and our members have continued to answer the call to get engaged! Attendance is up, engagement is up and if you haven't gotten involved or attended yet, today is a new day, with new opportunities and like-minded professionals ready to engage with you.

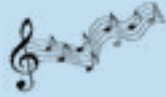
Best wishes for Happy and safe Holidays to all!

Jonathan

From the Editor . . .

It's the Holiday Season again. Thanks to my reliable companion, ChatGPT, I would like to regal you with a recent story I heard of an aspiring young hospital Finance employee who is trying desperately to keep his head above water during year end.

Sung to Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
You know budgetin', auditin',
Billing intrusions,
Cost-center spreadsheets
Causing delusions...
But do you recall...
The frazzled new finance dude of them all?



Evan the new accountant
Had a pile of forms so tall,
Looked like the Leaning Tower—
One sneeze would make them fall.
All of the seasoned analysts
Snickered when he'd try to code,
They said, "He'll learn the hard way...
Wait 'til month-end overload!"

Then one frantic closing night,
The CFO barked, "Hey you!
Evan, grab your calculator—
We're fourteen million off... times two!"

Then all the team applauded him,
As the CFO yelled, "Finally!"
Evan the new accountant—
Balanced all the P&Ls using
panic-fueled accounting, coffee and alchemy.

Happy Holidays to All!!



Jim Robertson

49th Annual Institute

By Michael P. McKeever, CPA, FHFMA



Michael P. McKeever

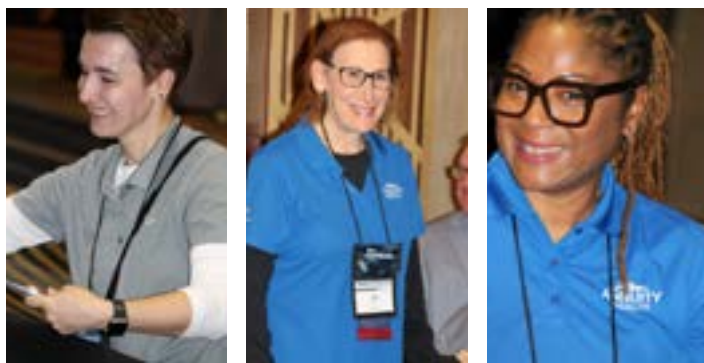
The 49th New Jersey Metro Philadelphia HFMA Annual Institute has ended, and all those involved can enjoy a much-deserved rest. It was a fantastic year, with a record post-pandemic number of attendees who enjoyed a broad range of topics thanks to the agenda created by the education team. And of course, the networking events were once again top-notch! And I have to call out the record-breaking donation to the Eagles Autism Foundation, the beneficiary of our Charity Event, thanks to the generous support of our attendees and sponsors, and with special thanks to the Besler family and Foundation as well as DL Planners.

Once again this year we gathered at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City for two and a half days of education, networking and fun. Special thanks go to Christine Gordon and Lisa Schaaf, Institute Committee Co-Chairs, Tara Bogart, Institute Education Chair, Chapter President Jonathan Besler, and most importantly Laura Hess, Chapter Administrator, who put this whole thing together. Also deserving thanks are those volunteers who served as Room Monitors for the education sessions and assisted at the networking events.



Shortly after lunch was served on Wednesday the Institute got under way with a warm welcome from Jonathan, followed by the Keynote Session, sponsored by MediQuant and presented by Jim Robertson from Greenbaum, Rowe, Smith & Davis LLP. Jim provided a federal update, focusing on the healthcare aspects of the recently enacted Big Beautiful Bill. Anticipating the concerns already raised by the legislation, Jim left a jar of Tums on the stage for anyone who might be feeling a little queasy as they learned of the projected effects of the bill on the healthcare delivery system. Some of the specifics that are of concern that are included in the bill are the number of people who will lose healthcare coverage, the decrease in Medicaid spending and the increase in the budget deficit. Jim also presented the anticipated effects for both New Jersey and

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Pennsylvania providers.

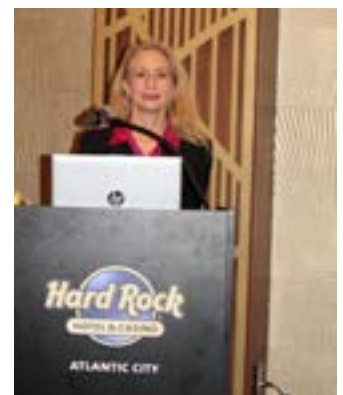
Immediately following the Keynote Presentation there was a Managed Care Panel, Moderated by Eric Fishbein from Virtua Health, with panelists Patrick Young from Hackensack Meridian Health, Kevin Joyce from Atlantic Health, Nisha Sikder from Valley Health and Jon Hollenweger from Inspira Health.



After a break where the attendees could wander through the Vendor Hall there were 2 series of breakout sessions, followed by another networking break and then a presentation by the Eagles Autism Foundation in the main ballroom. Hints were dropped that the evening's festivities would include certain unnamed special guests. The breakout sessions focused on such topics as Accounting and Auditing update, the 340B Program, price transparency data, DRG downgrades, transforming financial operations through automation, charge integrity for supplies and pharmaceuticals, and a federal legislative update.



After the breakout sessions the attendees returned to the main ballroom to hear a presentation by Ryan Hammond, the Executive Director of the Eagles Autism Foundation, the beneficiary of this year's Wednesday Night Charity Event, sponsored by Forvis Mazars and Hollis Cobb Associates. This engaging story of the history and focus of the Foundation apparently had the desired effect, as the Chapter raised \$25,000 in support of their fine work. And as an added attraction, we were joined at the Charity Event by Swoop, the Eagles Mascot, and 2 members of the Eagles Cheerleaders! Please see the additional article in this edition regarding the Charity Event for more details.



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Thursday morning opened with the Chapter's Annual Awards Ceremony. Maria Facciponti, Immediate Past President, presented awards to those members who reached certain milestones in their HFMA journeys, as well as Chapter specific awards. Congratulations to all of the award winners!



Thursday morning's agenda included a session on the importance of having AI in your toolbox, presented by Marcia Leighton from MCR Consulting. Marcia explained why AI tools are here to stay and the different types of available tools and the tasks they are most effectively performing. Throughout the interactive session she continually utilized online tools and encouraged the attendees to try them also. Finally, she included in her presentation a list of websites where attendees could access these various tools.



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That session was followed by the engaging Regulatory and Reimbursement Panel, sponsored by Moss Adams (now Baker Tilly). Jon Besler moderated the discussion, which included the panelists Christine Gordon from Virtua Health, Mike Rossi from Penn Medicine and Stephen Molitoris from Lehigh Valley Health Network. Attendees appeared to appreciate this addition to the agenda, as there were numerous questions and comments.



Following a networking break in the Vendor Hall was the Keynote Session, sponsored by Firstsource, and featuring Kiran Batheja from University Hospital in Newark and HFMA's National Chair. The basis of his presentation was this year's Chair's Theme, Lead Now! Broken down to its elements, the theme incorporates Learn, Embrace, Aspire, Deliver, Network, Opportunity, and the question, Will You? Finally, Kiran challenged the attendees to step up and join him



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in shaping the future of Healthcare in America. Also part of Kiran's presentation was a Fireside Chat, in which he asked President Jon Besler and me to join him as he asked a number of rapid-fire questions focusing on leadership style as well as our personal HFMA journeys. As a participant I have to say this was both informative and a lot of fun. And I don't think any of us left embarrassed.



During the lunch break, sponsored by Bank of America and Penn Credit, we offered a special session titled HFMA 101 for anyone interested in enhancing their experience as an HFMA member, or anyone considering membership. Presenting were Peter Pollio from the NJ Chapter and Marci Mollman, from the HFMA LEAN Team. There were also 2 Vendor Demo sessions, one presented by PMMC and the other by Med-Metrix.



After the lunch break there were a series of 3 concurrent breakout sessions, with the Ice Cream Social occurring prior to the third session. The first series included a session on building a revenue cycle workforce for the future, the NJ Supreme Court decision regarding providing uncompensated care, leveraging payer analytics to improve revenue cycle performance, and a Healthcare tax update. The second series included sessions on assessing technology's effectiveness in contract management, CDM management, properly identifying inpatient versus outpatient surgery, and a discussion of denials. The attendees then took a break to enjoy some ice cream delicacies, thanks to CorroHealth, who sponsored the Ice Cream Break. The final series included discussions on the 2026 IPPS Update, cybersecurity risk relative to claims complexity, using accurate data when negotiating payor contracts, and strategic outsourcing and automation.

The final session on Thursday was the Revenue Cycle Roundtable sponsored by AblePay Health and moderated by Eric Capuano from AblePay. The panelists included Jason

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Kane from Inspira Health, Steven Honeywell from Penn Medicine, and Jeff Hinkle from Temple Health. The panelists addressed issues such as patient engagement, denials, bad debt, understanding coverage, adoption of patient self-service portals and AI's role in the revenue cycle. At the conclusion of the panel discussion one lucky attendee received a \$200 gift card for winning the Bingo Card Challenge.



As has been tradition at the Annual Institute, Thursday night included two exceptional networking experiences. The always popular President's Reception was held this year at the Plum Lounge and co-sponsored by BESLER and Withum. After a short respite allowing attendees to enjoy dinner or just grab a short rest, the Late Night, sponsored by Med-Metrix, and featuring the Nerds, was held at the Balcony. The initial feedback from both events was extremely positive, with attendees appreciating the comfort of the Plum Lounge as well as the food at the President's Reception, and the space and strong vibe of the Late Night at the Balcony. The crowd especially enjoyed the performance by the Nerds, who played songs that covered a number of eras that really got the attendees hopping! Please enjoy the pictures from both events that accompany this article.



Friday morning began with an interesting session on finance diversification strategies. Mike Coppa and Michael Haas from RSM US walked the attendees through the need to identify new and diverse strategies for generating revenue while reducing reliance on traditional hospital operations.

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These strategies include expanding ambulatory and outpatient services and investing in innovation through partnerships, acquisitions or direct investment in healthcare startups. They also stressed the importance of aligning new ventures with organizational goals and building capabilities that support both short-term and long-term value.



The second session on Friday was presented by Ben Tweel, a cybersecurity expert from Bank of America. Sharing observations on recent industry trends, Ben recommended ideas for digital resiliency and best practices for navigating the risk inherent in today's evolving technology landscape.

As has become the norm, the final educational session of the 49th Annual Institute was the CFO Panel. The panel this year was moderated by Garrick Stoldt from Saint Peter's Healthcare, who also included his own observations to those topics discussed. The panelists included Stella Visaggio from Atlantic Health, Gene Gofman from Penn Presbyterian Medical Center and Frank Pipas from RWJ Barnabas Health. The panel discussed the coming challenges related to the Big Beautiful Bill, ongoing issues with payors including the increase in claim denials, and the importance of proactively addressing financial issues as they emerge.

Upon entering on Friday morning, the attendees were all given a ticket for a drawing that would take place after the last session. One lucky attendee left with a \$350 gift card as a memento of their experience. Special thanks go to Kimberly Raftery from Med-Matrix, who provided the pictures from the Institute that are included in this edition of the Garden State Focus. A complete album of pictures from the 49th Annual Institute, as well as other recent Chapter events, can be found through a link on the NJ HFMA website.

As the 49th Annual Institute came to a close, the attendees and sponsors were thanked once again for joining us and reminded that we expect to see you all again next year on October 21 - 23, 2026 for the 50th Anniversary Annual Institute, to be held at the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa. Tell you friends!

For more photos from the event please see page 32

NJ HFMA & Eagles Autism Foundation

By: Olivia Schaller & Jonathan Besler

On October 29-31, the New Jersey Metro Philadelphia 49th Annual Institute didn't just bring healthcare financial management professionals together; the event rallied a community of supporters eager to champion Eagles Autism Foundation's mission of bringing autism awareness to action. The NJ HFMA Conference brought together over 450 healthcare financial professionals from across the region and beyond to discuss the current challenges and opportunities within the healthcare provider community. There were robust opportunities for networking and educational sessions.

Attendees learned about the vision and inspiration that guides EAF through a presentation by EAF Executive Director, Ryan Hammond. She shared the history of EAF and how it has grown from a concept to reality to a multi-national opportunity for autism awareness and research. The EAF is touching lives around the world and Ryan inspired the audience with her passion for leadership, setting and working towards common goals. Conference goers were then given a chance to act in support of the autism community through a variety of fundraising efforts including: a series of raffles, EAF merchandise, and general donations. The NJ HFMA community generously showed their support as they came together to raise \$25,000 for individuals on the autism spectrum. These funds will help advance innovative autism research internationally and strengthen autism care programs in the Greater Philadelphia area. NJ HFMA Chapter President

Jonathan Besler had the following to offer: "Partnering with the Eagles Autism Foundation brought together 3 worlds close to my heart: the healthcare provider community, the Philadelphia Eagles and families that have been touched by autism. As Chapter President I was honored to be able to select this charity as our beneficiary. I set a goal to raise \$10,000 for the EAF, an amount never before accomplished by our Chapter. I am thrilled to say that our attendees and community met and exceeded that goal! Inspired by this call to action, my company is contributing an additional \$15,000 to bring our total contribution to \$25,000 for the Eagles Autism Foundation. I am blessed to work with so many dedicated and generous professionals."

The 49th Anniversary Annual Institute was an incredible blend of professional growth, robust educational opportunities, charitable giving, and leadership that make a transformational impact on members of our Eagles autism community.

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Jonathan is President & CEO of Besler Consulting. He can be reached at JBesler@besler.com.



For more photos from the event please see page 34

Clean Energy in New Jersey: How Healthcare Facilities Can Save Money and Save the Environment

By: Kenneth Sheehan



Kenneth Sheehan

It doesn't have to be about politics; it doesn't even have to even be about the environment. But the development and implementation of clean energy for medical or healthcare facilities remains a valuable and reasonable goal, based just on the dollars and cents.

Hospitals, long-term care facilities, and outpatient clinics are, by their nature, energy-intensive operations. Whether it's high intensity treatment and imaging equipment, or the simple 24 hours a day load for heating and cooling, kitchens, sterilization needs, hot water, and laundry services, this consistent and significant energy usage makes health care facilities of all types ideal for adding or retrofitting energy efficient and renewable-energy options, using New Jersey's portfolio of clean energy programs.

The benefits? Reduced operating costs, enhanced energy resilience, and improved employee and patient environments – all while being able to tell yourself, your employees, your customers and patients, and the world that your organization is doing its part to reduce energy usage in an environmentally sound and friendly manner.

Two entities in the State of New Jersey – the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) – have available an array of programs aimed at adding or modernizing high-efficiency HVAC systems, installing backup power generation, or transitioning healthcare facilities to renewable energy sources. These take multiple forms, including grants, loans, and technical assistance, as well as possible property tax credits for those entities that can benefit from them.

What programs can a New Jersey based healthcare facility take advantage of?

- Energy benchmarking – with the NJBPU's Commercial Existing Buildings Program, hospitals and other large-scale facilities can access free tools and professional audits to identify where energy is being lost and where upgrades will have the most impact, both in terms of energy savings and cost-efficiency.
- The Large Energy Users Program (LEUP) – this NJBPU program relies upon self-investment in energy efficiency and on-site generation such as combined heat and power

or fuel cell projects with incentives of up to \$4 million. These make the most sense for those buildings and facilities with significant load and significant energy costs.

- The New Jersey Clean Energy Loans (NJ CELs) program, offered by the NJEDA, provides long-term, low-interest loans ranging from \$250,000 to \$10 million, available to healthcare facilities undertaking clean energy installations, electrification upgrades, or EV infrastructure projects.
- The Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program, run through the NJEDA, enables health-care facilities to fund clean energy upgrades through a property tax assessment repaid over 20 to 30 years. That allows healthcare facilities with property tax liability to undertake deep and far-reaching retrofits, such as whole-building electrification or solar-plus-storage systems, without dipping into capital reserves or incurring significant debt.
- The Combined Heat and Power (CHP) program through the NJBPU allows healthcare facilities to build, own, and operate on site backup or even primary energy production. CHP systems are particularly well-suited for healthcare facilities as they produce not only electricity, but also thermal energy – basically steam or hot water – that can be used for heating and cooling, hot water production, and other valuable 24-hour energy needs. Couple this with the confidence that comes from having an off-grid, independent electric source that can provide power needs for a hospital or other facility with 24/7/365 uptime, and the program makes quite a bit of sense. This incentive program offers up to 30% of project costs to support on-site energy generation systems.
- For those facilities located in one of the over 300 New Jersey municipalities considered to be “environmental justice” communities, the NJEDA's NJ COOL grants—ranging from \$50,000 to \$1 million—will support HVAC modernization, weatherproofing, and building electrification.
- Finally, the NJBPU's Community Solar Energy Program (CSEP) allows those facilities that cannot install solar

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From Internship to Impact: How Two Early Careerists Found Their Path Through HFMA

By: Fatimah Muhammad, HFMA



Fatimah Muhammad

In healthcare finance, the journey from classroom theory to career confidence can feel overwhelming. For many young professionals entering this complex field, the gap between academic preparation and real-world readiness seems insurmountable. Yet two emerging leaders in New Jersey's healthcare finance community have discovered a powerful formula for success: combining hands-on experience with strategic involvement in professional associations from the very start of their careers.

Kaitlyn Senetra and Nishat Hossain share remarkably parallel stories. Both began as uncertain college students exploring healthcare administration, both found their calling through internships in the 340B Department at Saint Peter's University Hospital, and both credit their early membership in the Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA) as the catalyst that transformed their trajectories from tentative beginners to confident professionals. Now, having returned to Saint Peter's as full-time coordinators after gaining experience elsewhere, they represent a new generation of healthcare finance professionals who understand something their predecessors often learned too late: that professional development and practical experience aren't sequential steps, but complementary forces that, when pursued simultaneously, create exponential growth.

Their journeys offer a masterclass in intentional career development—one that challenges the conventional wisdom of “paying dues” before seeking professional involvement. Instead, their stories reveal how early, active engagement with industry organizations can accelerate growth, build confidence, and create opportunities that might otherwise take years to access.

The Power of Simultaneous Development

Both Kaitlyn and Nishat discovered healthcare administration through similar moments of clarity during their sophomore year. Neither came to college with healthcare in

mind, but both were drawn to the field through proximity—roommates pursuing nursing—and a shared realization that they wanted to help people without working in clinical settings.

“I could make a difference by helping healthcare organizations run more efficiently,” Kaitlyn explains, articulating a sentiment that Nishat echoes almost identically. This shared discovery of purpose led them both to Saint Peter's University Hospital for their required senior internships, where they were introduced not only to the complexities of the 340B drug pricing program but also to HFMA membership.

What makes their development remarkable isn't the internship alone, or HFMA membership alone, but the intentional combination of both. “I think having both HFMA and an internship during my senior year is what truly prepared me for life after graduation,” Nishat reflects. “I was able to get hands-on experience in healthcare finance while also attending events, networking, and meeting so many influential leaders in the industry. That combination gave me a real advantage.”

This dual-track approach provided them with something most graduates lack: context. The internship gave them real-world problems to solve, while HFMA gave them frameworks, terminology, and connections to understand those problems within the broader healthcare finance landscape. They weren't just learning tasks; they were learning the language and culture of their profession.

The Mentorship Advantage

Throughout both interviews, one name repeatedly emerges: Fatimah Muhammad, their supervisor in the 340B Department, who introduced them to HFMA and modeled effective leadership in healthcare finance.

“It was the first time I saw great leadership in action and had someone who genuinely cared about mentoring me and helping shape my career,” Kaitlyn recalls. “She taught me what it means to be a woman in the financial field and how to use that strength to make an impact.”



Kaitlyn Senetra



Nishat Hossain

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This mentorship proved so formative that it drew both young professionals back to Saint Peter's after their initial post-graduation positions elsewhere. "I had already experienced what a true leader/mentor was and it's hard to work for anyone else," Nishat admits. "In my heart, I knew that I wasn't done at Saint Peter's University Hospital."

Their experience underscores a critical truth about early career development: having a mentor who actively facilitates professional association involvement amplifies the impact of both relationships. Fatimah didn't just teach them job skills; she opened doors to an entire professional ecosystem through HFMA, demonstrating how effective mentors serve as connectors, not just teachers.

This mentorship extended beyond technical training. Both women describe working on projects that "pushed them out of their comfort zones"—from handling daily pharmacy invoices to interviewing senior hospital leaders as interns. These experiences built confidence that would prove essential as they navigated HFMA events and networking opportunities.

Strategic Credential Building

One of the most striking aspects of Kaitlyn and Nishat's approach is their immediate, strategic engagement with HFMA's educational resources. Both pursued certification courses from the moment they joined as student members, recognizing that credentials would differentiate them in a competitive job market.

"I immediately started a certification course because I wanted to make the most of my membership," Kaitlyn explains. Both have earned their Revenue Cycle certification and are currently pursuing the Certified Healthcare Financial Professional (CHFP) credential—significant achievements for professionals still in the earliest stages of their careers.

This proactive approach to credentialing reflects a sophisticated understanding of professional development. Rather than waiting until they "felt ready" or had years of experience, they recognized that credentials would help them stand out during their initial job searches and provide structured learning to accelerate their competency development.

"The certification courses alone add tremendous value, especially for students or recent graduates who want to stand out when job searching," Nishat emphasizes. "It also helps you get your name out there, meet people in the industry, and even discover potential organizations to work for."

Their commitment to continuous learning through HFMA's free courses demonstrates how young professionals can leverage association resources to supplement their formal education and fill knowledge gaps that inevitably exist after graduation.

The Transformative Power of Events

While certifications provided structured learning, HFMA events offered something equally valuable: immersion in the professional culture of healthcare finance and access to leaders who might otherwise be unreachable for new graduates.

Both Kaitlyn and Nishat describe the 49th Annual Institute as transformative. "It was the first time I felt like a real member of HFMA, not just someone new trying to find their place," Kaitlyn recalls. "I had the chance to interview key leaders in HFMA and the broader healthcare finance field, and even the

educational sessions left a huge impact."

This sense of belonging—of transitioning from outsider to insider—represents a critical milestone in professional identity development. By attending events as students and early careerists, they accelerated this transition in ways that would have been impossible through work experience alone.

The networking aspect proved particularly valuable. "HFMA events are the perfect place to network and learn directly from professionals in the field," Nishat notes, describing a range of events from "casual pizza meetups to the Annual Institute." This variety allowed them to build relationships in low-pressure settings while also accessing high-level educational content and leadership insights.

Importantly, their participation in the event wasn't passive. Both have been involved in conducting interviews and engaging with senior leaders—activities that built their confidence and visibility within the organization while providing valuable learning experiences.

Overcoming Imposter Syndrome Through Community

Perhaps the most universal challenge both women faced was imposter syndrome—that persistent feeling of not belonging among more experienced professionals. "Being a young professional, it is hard not to feel like an imposter while trying to establish myself in the industry," Nishat admits. "Working among people who have years of experience was intimidating when I was first starting."

HFMA provided a remedy for this common early-career struggle: a community of professionals at various career stages who were invested in supporting newcomers. "Having HFMA resources and connections made a huge difference—I was able to grow my knowledge with advanced courses and webinars and talk to leaders that truly want to help early careerists," Kaitlyn explains.

This supportive environment allowed them to build competence and confidence simultaneously. Rather than waiting until they felt "qualified enough" to engage with senior professionals, they found that engagement itself was the path to qualification.

Their involvement in HFMA committees—both serve on the Social Media and Golf Committees—further accelerated this process. Committee work provided structured ways to contribute, build relationships, and gain visibility without requiring extensive technical expertise. "Volunteering has helped me meet new members and learn from their experiences, which has been one of the best parts of getting more involved," Kaitlyn notes.

The Value of Exploration and Return

An unexpected but crucial element of both career journeys was their decision to leave Saint Peter's after graduation, work elsewhere, and then return. Both took entry-level positions at other healthcare organizations—Kaitlyn at a non-profit where she learned about Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and Nishat in a similar role that exposed her to healthcare politics and project management.

These experiences, while valuable, ultimately clarified what they had left behind. "I couldn't shake the feeling that I was not using my full capabilities," Kaitlyn reflects. "I quickly outgrew this organization and what it had to offer for entry-

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level workers who wanted to grow.”

Their return to Saint Peter’s wasn’t a step backward but a strategic choice informed by broader experience. They now appreciate the quality of leadership and mentorship they initially took for granted, and they bring new skills and perspectives that enhance their current contributions.

“Even though I was an intern here, being a full-time employee is completely different,” Nishat explains. “Before, I was just starting my career and finding my path. Now, I have found it and this role is helping me shape the future healthcare leader I aspire to become.”

This journey of exploration and return reflects a mature approach to career development—one that values both breadth of experience and depth of mentorship and recognizes that the right organizational fit becomes apparent only through comparison.

Building Technical and Interpersonal Competencies

When asked about critical skills for success in healthcare finance, both women emphasize the importance of balancing technical knowledge with soft skills. On the technical side, they cite revenue cycle fundamentals and 340B program complexities as essential knowledge areas developed through both their work experience and HFMA certifications.

But they’re equally emphatic about the importance of communication and networking skills. “Through HFMA events and committee work, I’ve learned how to build relationships, ask questions, and navigate professional spaces with more confidence,” Kaitlyn explains. “Those experiences have really shaped my growth early in my career.”

This balanced skill development reflects the comprehensive nature of their professional development strategy. HFMA didn’t just provide technical education; it offered repeated opportunities to practice professional communication, relationship-building, and leadership in supportive contexts.

Their committee involvement deserves particular attention. By volunteering on the Social Media Committee, they’re not only contributing to HFMA’s visibility but also developing skills in digital communication and platform management—competencies increasingly valuable in all professional contexts. Similarly, their work on the Golf Committee provides exposure to event planning and member engagement strategies.

“Social media plays such a big role in how we connect today, and it’s a great tool for helping HFMA grow its platform,” Nishat notes, demonstrating awareness of how their volunteer contributions align with broader organizational needs while developing their own capabilities.

Defining Leadership for the Next Generation

Both Kaitlyn and Nishat articulate a vision of leadership that emphasizes service, knowledge-sharing, and community-building rather than hierarchical authority. “Leadership in HFMA is about being involved, sharing knowledge, and helping others,” Kaitlyn explains. “Whether that’s by connecting members, supporting new professionals, or contributing to meaningful conversations that move healthcare forward.”

This conception of leadership as facilitation and connection rather than command reflects their own experience of being mentored and their commitment to paying that forward. They’ve both been inspired by specific HFMA leaders—

particularly Laura Hess—whose passion and kindness motivated them to deepen their involvement.

“Even though I’ve only worked with her for a short time, I’ve already been inspired by her drive and the impact she’s made within HFMA,” Nishat says of Hess. “Her passion and kindness have motivated me to get more involved and continue growing within the organization.”

This leadership philosophy—one that prioritizes accessibility, generosity, and authentic connection—suggests that as Kaitlyn and Nishat assume more prominent roles within HFMA, they’ll perpetuate the supportive culture that enabled their own development.

Practical Advice: Three First-Year Actions

When asked what concrete actions students and early careerists should take in their first year of HFMA membership, both women offer identical advice that reflects their own successful strategies:

Take a certification. HFMA’s educational courses provide structured learning, credibility, and demonstrable commitment to professional development. Starting early maximizes the career impact of these credentials.^a

Volunteer. Committee involvement provides low-barrier entry into the HFMA community, opportunities to contribute meaningfully, and exposure to experienced professionals who can offer guidance and connections.

Attend events. From informal gatherings to major conferences, events offer irreplaceable opportunities to build relationships, learn from peers and leaders, and develop a sense of belonging in the professional community.

This three-part formula—learn, serve, connect—represents a holistic approach to professional association involvement that goes far beyond passive membership. It reflects their understanding that value comes not from membership itself but from active engagement with the opportunities membership provides.

The Broader Implications

Kaitlyn and Nishat’s stories challenge several common assumptions about early career development. First, they demonstrate that young professionals don’t need to wait until they’re “established” before engaging with professional associations. Early involvement, while potentially intimidating, accelerates rather than distracts from career development.

Second, their experiences reveal the compounding benefits of combining practical work experience with professional association engagement. Each reinforces the other: work experience provides context for association learning, while association involvement provides frameworks and connections that enhance work performance.

Third, their journeys illustrate the enduring importance of mentorship—not just for technical skill development but for opening doors to professional networks and opportunities that would otherwise remain invisible to newcomers. Effective mentors don’t just teach; they connect.

Finally, their rapid progression from uncertain students to confident professionals actively contributing to HFMA’s mission demonstrates the accelerated development possible when young professionals approach their careers with intention, take advantage of available resources, and commit

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to continuous learning and engagement.

Conclusion

Kaitlyn and Nishat's journeys from uncertain college sophomores to engaged early careerists offer a blueprint for anyone entering healthcare finance—or any complex professional field. Their success stems not from exceptional luck or connections, but from a strategic, intentional approach to professional development that leverages both practical experience and professional association involvement from the earliest possible stage.

Their stories reveal several powerful truths: that confidence comes from engagement, not from waiting until you feel ready; that professional associations provide not just education but community and identity; that mentorship accelerates development in ways that independent work never can; and that the path to leadership begins with showing up, volunteering, and continuously learning.

For HFMA and similar professional organizations, Kaitlyn and Nishat represent the return on investment in student and early careerist programming. By welcoming these young professionals when they were still forming their professional identities, HFMA didn't just gain members—it gained passionate advocates who are now actively contributing to the organization's mission and inspiring others to follow their path.

Their message to students and new graduates considering HFMA membership is unequivocal: "Get involved the moment you hear about HFMA. I had no idea how much this association would influence my career when I first joined, and now it's become an essential part of my professional journey."

As they continue developing as healthcare finance professionals, both remain committed to the principle that shaped their own development: paying forward the mentorship, support, and opportunities they received. "I'm excited for the day when I can share my own knowledge with new members, just as HFMA leaders have done for me," Kaitlyn reflects—a commitment that ensures the cycle of mentorship and development will continue.

Their journey from interns to coordinators and analysts, from uncertain students to confident professionals, from passive members to active contributors, represents more than personal success stories. It demonstrates the transformative power of intentional professional development, the compounding benefits of early association involvement, and the enduring

importance of mentorship and community in building not just careers but careers with meaning.

For the next generation of healthcare finance professionals reading their stories, the message is clear: your career begins not with your first job, but with your first intentional step toward engagement with your professional community. The resources, relationships, and opportunities you need are available now—not someday when you feel ready, but today. The only question is whether you'll seize them.

In healthcare finance, as in healthcare itself, timing matters. Kaitlyn and Nishat understood this intuitively, and their early action has positioned them not just to succeed in their careers but to shape the future of healthcare finance in New Jersey and beyond. Their full-circle return to Saint Peter's represents not an ending but a new beginning—one in which they'll mentor the next generation of interns who, inspired by their example, will discover that the path to impact in healthcare finance begins with a single decision: to get involved, to show up, and to commit to becoming not just better professionals but better leaders who lift others as they climb.

In an industry where experience is often gatekept and opportunities hoarded, Kaitlyn and Nishat's journeys break the myth that young professionals must wait their turn—showing instead that early investment in emerging talent, genuine mentorship, and opening our professional communities to those still finding their footing can do more than just develop better careers; it can improve the healthcare system itself. Their transformation from uncertain interns to confident leaders in just a few years isn't only inspiring but also a call to every HFMA member to ask: Who are we mentoring today? What doors are we opening? Are we fostering a profession that welcomes ambition and nurtures potential, or one that requires credentials before community? The future of healthcare finance isn't waiting in some graduate program or entry-level role—it's already here, eager to contribute, hungry to learn, and ready to lead. The only question is whether we'll recognize it, invest in it, and make room for it. -Fatimah Muhammad, FHFMA

About the author

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panels on-site to essentially "subscribe" to off-site solar projects and receive credits on their utility bills. No need for capital outlay and no need for long-term development and investment.

Clean energy adoption is no longer just an aspirational or stretch goal; it has become an important need, a cost-savings, and a strategic advantage. No reason exists not to take full advantage of the State's resources when looking to buy, build, renovate, or expand healthcare facilities of all types and all sizes here in New Jersey.

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Healthcare and Rising Energy Costs – What You Can Do

By: Paul Abramson



Paul Abramson

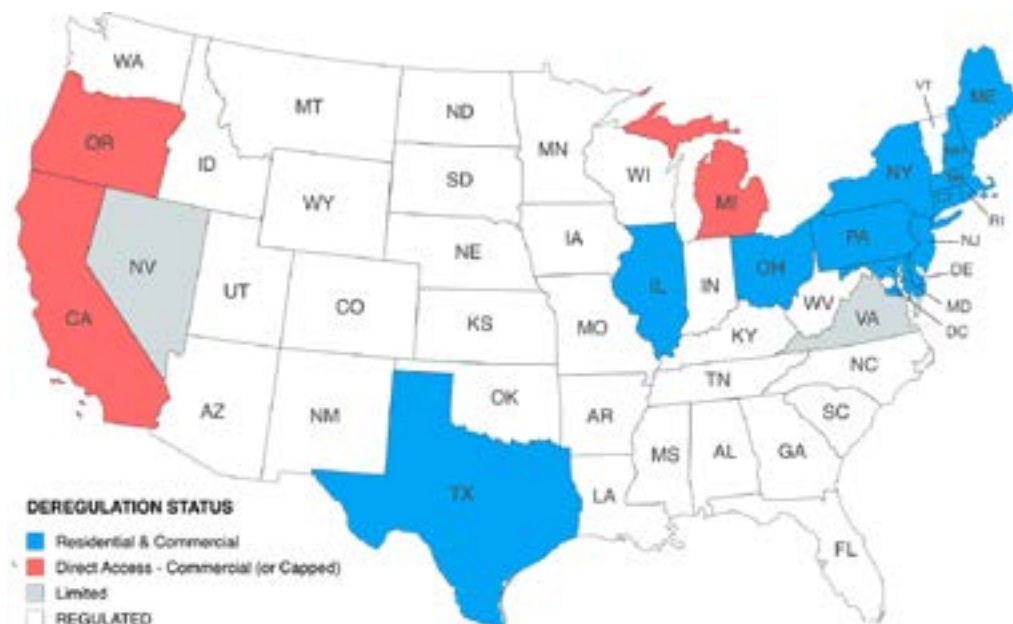
Hospitals and large clinical facilities operate around the clock, with lighting, HVAC systems, diagnostics equipment, refrigeration, sterilization units and life-support systems running continuously. That level of energy consumption makes the supply of electricity and natural gas a significant budget line—and one that is increasingly exposed to price volatility and upward cost pressure. For healthcare finance executives, the ability to bring cost certainty and risk management to the supply of energy is compelling.

In states where energy markets are deregulated (see map below), commercial and industrial (C&I) customers, including hospitals, can access third-party supply contracts via a competitive bidding process. Major third-party suppliers in the energy markets will bid with favorable fixed-rate terms, typically spanning 12 to 60 months. Locking in a fixed rate today serves as a hedge against the broadly forecasted increase in energy prices over the coming years.

From a finance and operations perspective, the benefits are threefold:

- Contractually fixed rates convert what would otherwise be a variable cost into a predictable expense, simplifying budgeting and rate modeling
- The competitive bidding process means organizations are not simply accepting the utility's default supply rate—they are actively soliciting bids from large stable suppliers, increasing the likelihood of cost savings. There is no cost or obligation for running the bid.
- In a sector where continuity of operations is critical, entering a supply contract will never disrupt the physical delivery of electricity or gas: the local utility continues to deliver and service the infrastructure, while the supply component is handled by the third-party contract.

For hospital financial executives, the strategy isn't about gimmicks. It's about improving cost certainty, managing risk, and finding opportunities in the deregulated supplier market. In a marketplace characterized by rising costs, locking in favorable long-term supply rates via competitive bidding can become a strategic lever in managing the total cost of facility operations.



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One System, One Family: Inside the Financial Leadership of New Jersey's Largest Health System

Frank Pipas on balancing mission and margins, building engaged teams, and leading through financial discipline

By: Denny Henderson

Frank Pipas never planned to spend his career in healthcare finance. Fresh out of college with an accounting degree, he envisioned himself as "Joe CPA," hanging his shingle and building a traditional practice. Or perhaps returning to his original dream of becoming a math teacher and high school football coach.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd be in this industry," Pipas admits, reflecting on a career that has spanned more than three decades and included leadership roles at some of New Jersey's most prominent health systems.

Today, as Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of RWJBarnabas Health—New Jersey's largest academic health system with 14 hospitals, 43,000 employees, and a service area covering nine counties and five million people—Pipas brings that teaching instinct to one of healthcare's most challenging roles. His journey offers valuable lessons for finance professionals navigating an industry where the tension between mission and margin has never been more acute.

The Accidental Healthcare Career

Pipas' entry into healthcare came through a recruiter's phone call at a pivotal moment. After three years at a small public accounting firm in central New Jersey, he was contemplating a pivoting to pursue a career in teaching when Ernst & Young came calling. The firm had just merged with PKF, and Joe Lemaire was building the healthcare division.

"It was a great experience because it had the benefit of the big firm, but the healthcare division was like a 40-person team within the larger confines of Ernst & Young," Pipas recalls. "At the time, we had the vast majority of the hospitals in the state." That immersion in New Jersey's healthcare landscape provided Pipas with something invaluable: a comprehensive view of how hospitals operated financially across diverse settings and challenges. After three years at EY, he made the jump to

Liberty Healthcare System, a three-hospital inner-city system serving Jersey City, Meadowlands, and Greenville.

It was there that Pipas discovered his calling. "The altruistic value of not-for-profit healthcare really resonated with me," he says. A brief two-year detour into telecom only confirmed what he'd found: "I quickly realized that I did not enjoy working for the shareholder as much as I enjoyed working for the communities that I was serving."

For aspiring healthcare finance leaders, Pipas's path underscores an important reality: technical accounting skills matter, but finding personal alignment with healthcare's mission is what sustains a long-term career. "If you're going to be in the healthcare provider space, embrace it and understand the value you bring to the patients, understand how you connect with the overall service and mission of the organization, and you will be much happier in your career," he advises.

The Teacher as Leader

That early dream of teaching never really left Pipas—it just evolved. His leadership philosophy centers on developing people and helping them see how their work connects to the organizational mission. It's an approach shaped by his upbringing around sports and a deep belief in the power of teams.

"Healthcare is definitely a people business," Pipas emphasizes. "If you treat your team well and you treat your patients well, you're going to be successful at the end of the day. That's what it comes down to."

But teaching 43,000 employees across 14 hospitals requires more than good intentions. Pipas has built a systematic approach centered on transparency and communication. He holds quarterly town halls with every member of his finance team—from administrative assistants to SVPs—creating forums where hierarchy dissolves and questions are encouraged. "People don't know what they don't know, and a lot of people



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are afraid to ask," he explains. "When you start doing it, people don't ask a lot of questions, but as they get more comfortable with you, they start to feel like they can voice their concerns, opinions, thoughts, questions."

The evolution of these town halls offers insight into building psychological safety in large organizations. "The conversations have gotten much more interactive in my third year here than clearly the first two," Pipas notes. "I think the title may intimidate—in some cases, I'm four or five levels up from some of these individuals. But to me, I'm just another person. I have a title, yes, but at the end of the day, I value what they do as much as I value what I do."

This genuineness must come through in conversation for people to trust they can get real answers. "I want them to hear directly from me," Pipas says. "I'd rather them not develop their own impressions as to what's going on in the organization or have any false thoughts about where we're going."

The Turnaround and the Tightrope

When Pipas joined RWJBarnabas in December 2022, the system was losing money. The challenge was clear: reinvigorate financial discipline and drive profitability following the end of the public health emergency. By 2024, the system had swung from a \$212 million operating loss in 2022 to \$291 million in operating income.

The turnaround wasn't about dramatic cost-cutting. Instead, it reflected Pipas' philosophy that "trying to cut your way to success will never work."

"For me, financial discipline is not about tightening the belt, per se," he explains. "It's about making sure we are making the best decisions on how to deploy our resources. We're going to continue to invest. Not only because it helps grow your market share, but also the community deserves to have expanded, continued services provided to them. That's what we're here for. We're not here to make a dollar, we're here to heal people. The fact that we need to make money to do that is a byproduct."

This philosophy manifests in a rigorous capital allocation process. When Pipas arrived, he established an objective framework for evaluating both qualitative and quantitative benefits of initiatives addressing costs. Monthly capital meetings bring senior executives together to review proposals developed in a consistent manner across all entities.

"We have a lot of good ideas that we turn down in order to make room for the great ones," Pipas says. "There's only so much you can invest in over the course of a year. It's not like we say no to them, it's more that we put them on the back burner and they may resurface later and get re-evaluated."

But here's the crucial insight for CFOs: Pipas' role isn't to say no—it's to help leadership understand trade-offs. When CEO Mark Manigan wants to make a major investment, Pipas lays out the implications clearly.

"If we want to make investments that are going to potentially jeopardize the potential well-being, financially, of the organization, we have that frank conversation as a leadership team and say, 'Hey, we can make this \$40 million investment, but know that investment is taking away from others which when you look objectively at the financial performance are better performers. It still may make sense to advance a project such as a Food Pharmacy in Newark when it is more in line with our mission—but know that that's not going to advance the organization move forward financially.' The team is going in eyes wide open on what we're doing and how we're doing it." This transparency extends to the inherent tension in mission-driven organizations. A \$900 million freestanding cancer hospital in New Brunswick made sense because it created capacity in a full campus, opening up four or five floors in the main facility. But acquiring Trinitas—an inner-city mission hospital serving a vulnerable population—requires a different calculus.

"Those hospitals without a system wouldn't exist today," Pipas notes. "They just couldn't survive on their own. And the fact that that patient population needs to be taken care of is important."

One System, One Family: The Integration Imperative

The "One System, One Family" operating model that CEO Mark Manigan and former CFO (now COO) John Doll launched represents the strategic framework Pipas inherited—and one he was uniquely positioned to advance.

"Having come from where I came from, I thought my talent lent itself towards some of that work," Pipas says, referencing his 21 years at Hackensack Meridian Health, where he developed numerous integration strategies, including a key consolidation that helped to create the system as it operates today.

For Pipas, harmonizing processes across 14 hospitals isn't about bureaucratic standardization—it's about creating consistent experiences and enabling better decisions. "We're too big of an organization to not manage by process," he explains. "There is value in having a single experience when you walk into any RWJ Barnabas facility, whether it be a hospital or an ambulatory setting, both from a team member perspective, but also from a customer service perspective."

The system has become much more metric-driven under the new leadership structure, focusing on investments in automation designed to have people "work at top of license or skill set." But perhaps most importantly, the organization has intentionally moved to developing true service line brands across the system.

"Cardiovascular care at Monmouth should feel and look and behave similarly to cardiovascular care in Newark Beth Israel," Pipas explains. "Because, again, it's about the brand. If you have a bad experience at any one of our facilities, it could negatively impact the overall opinion of that patient and the

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patient's family on future services."

The Process Paradox

For an organization of RWJBarnabas' scale, process becomes both essential and potentially constraining. Pipas has learned that the key to gaining buy-in isn't mandating compliance, it's explaining why.

"Once team members understand why the process was designed the way it was designed, it makes them a lot more amenable to following it," he says. "It goes back to engagement, if the team members don't understand the 'why', they don't have any real skin in the game on following it."

He uses the example of contract signature policies. Rather than simply requiring GPO involvement and specific contractual terms, Pipas helps leaders understand the protective elements they might not consider, like ensuring appropriate contract termination clauses in every vendor contract.

"Having contracts flow through a thoughtful process protects the organization; an individual leader wouldn't necessarily know how best to position the system if contracting on their own. By going through the process, the leader has the benefit of leveraging the purchasing and legal team that are negotiating contracts every day" he explains. "There are things a leader may not think of as the operator that we have collectively in this process."

This approach to process, as enabling rather than constraining, reflects a broader leadership insight: people support what they help create and understand. Threading that needle "from concept through future deployment planning of capital" helps team members see how individual decisions connect to five-year capital plans, budgeting, and ultimately, patient care.

Navigating the C-Suite Dynamic

Pipas credits much of his success to the quality of CEOs he's worked for, John Lloyd at Meridian, Bob Garrett at Hackensack Meridian, and now Mark Manigan at RWJBarnabas. "Each of the CEOs I've worked for had very good long-term strategic plans, and they built teams around them to be able to succeed in attaining those strategic plans."

For Pipas, successful CEOs share common traits: they're visionary about where they want to take the organization, but they understand their limitations and build teams to fill gaps. They connect with team members and manage boards equally well. And crucially, they create space for their CFOs to provide frank financial counsel.

Pipas is particularly enthusiastic about a structural advantage at RWJBarnabas: a financially savvy COO. "That's one of the things that attracted me about the role, having a financially prudent chief operating officer is priceless," Pipas says of John Doll, the former CFO who now serves as COO.

"My goal is to advance Mark and John's vision," Pipas explains. "I'm here to help support them in advancing those

strategic priorities in support of that vision. And my role is then to help the team make it work."

This notion of the CFO as enabler rather than obstacle represents an evolution in how finance leaders think about their role. It requires both technical excellence and emotional intelligence, that ability to deliver hard truths while maintaining trust and alignment.

The Payer Partnership Puzzle

One area where Pipas has adapted his approach is payer relations. He has embraced RWJBarnabas' more collaborative philosophy.

"RWJ Barnabas views the payers much more as partners," he notes. "Here, there's a little bit more of ebb and flow in the dialogue, which is interesting, and it's been effective for this organization."

The system maintains "payer parity" keeping all payers within a band of reasonableness rather than maximizing rates with any single payer. "I think that goes to our credibility with them," Pipas explains. "The fact that we're not just squeezing every last bit of juice out of the lemon, that we're looking at being equitable in the way we manage our payer relationships." Still, Pipas doesn't shy away from addressing administrative burden in negotiations—particularly as payers deploy AI on the front end that creates obstacles to appropriate payment. And he's candid about the frustration many CFOs share: that efforts to control healthcare costs focus disproportionately on provider margins rather than pharmaceutical costs, managed care margins, or manufacturer pricing.

"If you look at the providers, margins range anywhere from losses/break even to low single digit margins are not all that significant," he argues. "And most of provider's margin is reinvested back into the staff and the communities. It's not going into shareholders' profits. If I could change one thing, it would be change that optic that to reduce the cost of healthcare, you have to squeeze the provider. That's not the answer."

Technology: Core First, Then Innovation

With approximately 60 AI initiatives currently in exploratory phases, RWJBarnabas is hardly a technology laggard. But Pipas takes a deliberate approach, having just completed a five- to six-year Epic implementation across the enterprise.

"From my perspective, if we could do it in the core IT platform, it's better than putting the bolt-on," he explains. "So let's lean into the core as aggressively as we can. If Epic has something on their time horizons, could be two years out versus buying it from a third-party vendor today, we make that evaluation."

The system prioritizes areas where AI can deliver clear value—revenue cycle, credentialing, quality, front-end access center activities. But every initiative faces the same question: Does this investment make more sense than opening a new primary care office somewhere?

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Spotlight on Connection: Building Networks and Empowering Leaders Through Our Social Media

By: Nishat Hossain & Kaitlyn Senetra

As the New Jersey Chapter of HFMA wraps up another successful event, the organization continues to uphold one of its most enduring and defining values, the strength of connection. The 49th Annual Institute in the vibrant city of Atlantic City, the NJ HFMA community proudly launched a new social media initiative designed to showcase members' invaluable experiences and celebrate the power of relationship building. The institute served as a lively forum, where members were given an opportunity to share insightful thoughts, reflect on shared challenges, and celebrate collective achievements. They spoke about learning from each other's practices, the importance of networking and leadership development, the educational and certification opportunities, and the value of mentorship.

Members were featured in a series of digital spotlights during the three-day event in Atlantic City, where they spoke with the social media committee about their experiences serving within HFMA and how HFMA has served them in return. They reflected on their most memorable moments, and the biggest lessons learned from being a part of such a community. Members spoke about the number of years they have been involved with HFMA and how they have seen each other grow in their professional settings. Others also highlighted how being a member was monumental in their career, opening new doors and helping them discover new passions.

We connected with some of the most respected leaders within the chapter. They shared thoughtful stories, honest perspectives, and powerful reminders of why HFMA continues to make a lasting impact and carry on the mission of leading the financial management space in healthcare. Here are just a few of the highlights from those conversations:

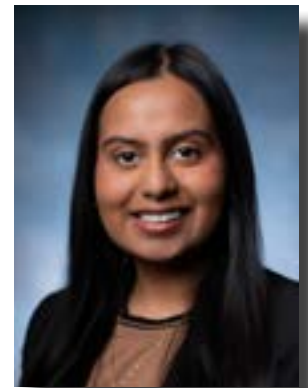
Michael P. McKeever, CPA, FHFMA, CHC, a seasoned HFMA leader and mentor, reflected on his time and his hope for the future, "You think about a journey as a beginning, middle, and end, and I don't know what the end looks like yet. I enjoy working with folks, and there are so many smart, engaged young people and it gives me a lot of faith in the future of our association."

Christine Gordan, an advocate for collaboration and

partnership as a Director of Reimbursement Services, discussed the beauty of networking, "HFMA is absolutely fantastic for the networking aspect, the vendors, and all our partners. We all are competing hospitals, but everyone is there for us to help each other because of HFMA."

Lastly, James Robertson, a healthcare attorney and champion for early-career development expressed his views on professional growth, "These events are so important for people that are early in their careers. You have to meet the people who are doing what you do in other institutions, and you have to develop that network as early as possible. It's a time when you can take your head out of your phone and meet people face to face. You share your experiences with other people, some are your competitors, but we are all trying to do what's right for the patients."

It is not every day that you get to spend time with legends, CFOs, CEOs, and future innovators who are going to leave their imprint on the healthcare industry, but through HFMA, you experience it all in the same room. Everyone is equal and willing to share their experiences, their stories, and most importantly, their commitment to supporting newcomers as they navigate their journey and embark on the challenges that healthcare finance is being subjected to today. Through this new digital platform, the chapter hopes to reach vast audiences and strengthen not only individual careers, but the collective advancement of healthcare finance within the state and beyond. As we look ahead to 2026, the New Jersey Chapter of HFMA remains dedicated, strong, and more fearless than ever to nurturing the relationships and professional growth that define our community, state, and our neighborhoods across the healthcare industry. The insights and perspectives shared at the 49th Annual Institute remind us that HFMA is more than an association; it is having thoughtful leaders, innovators, as well



Nishat Hossain



Kaitlyn Senetra

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"They all get evaluated in a consistent manner," Pipas says, noting that Chief Information Officer Rob Adamson plays a key role in development decisions.

This pragmatism about technology reflects a broader CFO reality: the need to balance innovation with proven returns in an environment where expenses rise at 6% annually while revenues may not keep pace with that growth.

Lessons for the Next Generation

For finance professionals aspiring to system leadership roles, Pipas offers hard-won wisdom about navigating the transition from facility-focused to system-wide thinking.

"Always try to do the right thing," he begins simply. "If you're doing the right thing very often, not too much bad will happen. If your mind is right aligned, and you're doing what you think is right, more often than not, you're going to be successful in any outcome."

But the real challenge, he notes, is learning to walk a tightrope: "You can't get too caught up in managing the financial performance that you strangle out the ability for the organization to progress. So it's a delicate tightrope walk to ensure that we're progressing the organization the way it needs to be advanced while maintaining fiscal performance."

The flip side is equally dangerous: "You also can't lean the other way. You can't advance the organization at a pace that's inconsistent with the ability to support it."

Site-based leaders often struggle with this system perspective. A leader at a profitable hospital like New Brunswick or Monmouth may question why they can't move forward with an investment when their facility is performing well financially. But as Pipas explains, they may not see the full picture: "We need to make sure we're paternal to a Trinitas"—supporting hospitals serving vulnerable populations even when it means restraining investment elsewhere in the system.

Understanding that balance—between site success and system sustainability—separates facility finance leaders from system CFOs.

Staying Connected to Mission

Despite leading finance for an organization approaching \$7 billion in economic impact, Pipas maintains practices that keep

him connected to why the work matters. He rounds hospitals, talks to patients and team members. Not constantly, but "often enough that I stay connected."

"When I look around and I have a neighbor call me and say, 'Listen, my son went to your facility last week, and they had a great experience,' to me, I'm like, 'That's great. I'm so happy to hear that. Let me share that with that campus,'" he says. "That's what it's about. That's what drives me to get up and go to work every day."

It's a reminder that even in the most complex financial leadership roles, the work ultimately connects to human outcomes. For Pipas, that connection traces back to his mother, a registered nurse who rose through the ranks to become a Director of Quality Assurance, and who first showed him what healthcare service looks like.

"We're in finance, so we're not out there saving lives," Pipas acknowledges. "But we're helping the organization be successful to make the investments they need to make to bring the services to the community that need to be there. So in that way, we are helping our neighbors, our loved ones in being able to get the care they need when they need it."

For a profession often reduced to numbers and margins, it's a philosophy worth remembering: The best healthcare CFOs aren't just financial stewards, they're mission enablers who understand that sustainable finances and community service aren't opposing forces, but two sides of the same essential coin.

Frank Pipas serves as Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of RWJBarnabas Health, New Jersey's largest academic health system. He has been recognized by Becker's Hospital Review as a Hospital & Health System CFO to Know and, along with CEO Mark Manigan, as part of Becker's Highly Successful CEO-CFO Duos.

About the authors

Frank Pipas was interviewed by Denny Henderson, FHFMA, from FairCode and was written with assistance from Claude, an AI assistant built by Anthropic.

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as changemakers at your fingertips. A strong network is both the engine and fuel that drives success. Every member's passion and commitment to learning is inspiring whether they are an early careerist, approaching retirement, or a legendary industry leader. New Jersey HFMA enters the coming year ready to build on its legacy of excellence and empower members to create an even stronger and more impactful, connected future for not only healthcare, but the members of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

About the authors

Nishat Hossain is a 340B Program Analyst at Saint Peter's University Hospital. She can be reached at nhossain@saintpetersuh.com.

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Dear Fellow HFMA Members:

I am pleased to invite members, member's spouses, or member's dependents to apply for this year's 2026 NJ HFMA Thomas G. Shanahan Scholarship. The New Jersey Chapter of HFMA will be offering at least one scholarship at a minimum of one thousand dollars. You, your spouse or dependent may be eligible for the scholarship if you meet the following criteria:

- Member, in good standing, of the New Jersey Chapter for the last two years.
- Spouse or dependent of a member, in good standing, of the New Jersey Chapter, for the last two years.
- Enrolled in an accredited college, university, nursing school or other allied health professional school.

Preference will be given to applicants pursuing degrees in finance, accounting, healthcare administration or a healthcare related field of study. Tuition not paid by an employer or other scholarship will qualify for the HFMA scholarship.

We make our selection based on merit, academic achievement, civic and professional activities, course of study and content of your application and essay. We do not use income in our selection process. To apply, please submit a completed Scholarship Application no later than March 1, 2026. Members of the Chapter's Board of Directors, Officers and Advisory Council and their spouses or dependents are not eligible for scholarships. Prior awardees are not eligible for a subsequent scholarship, although other dependents in the member's family are still eligible.

We will announce the recipient(s) of the 2026 NJ HFMA Thomas G. Shanahan Scholarship at our annual golf outing on May 7, 2026. If you have any questions or wish to receive additional applications, please contact Laura Hess at njhfma@aol.com.

We look forward to receiving your application and wish you success in your academic endeavors.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Facciponti

Maria Facciponti
Chair, 2026 Scholarship Committee

NEW JERSEY HEALTHCARE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION MEMBER'S ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

MEMBER INFORMATION

Member Name _____
Member Address _____
Membership # _____
Years in HFMA _____ # Years in NJ Chapter _____
Member Employer _____

APPLICANT INFORMATION PART 1 - PERSONAL DATA

Applicant Name _____
Address _____
Relationship to Member _____
College _____
Course (s) to be taken _____

Matriculated Student YES _____ NO _____
Degree/Program Pursued _____
Anticipated Graduation Date _____
Major _____ Annual Tuition _____
Amount of Employer Support _____
Amount of Other Scholarships Awarded _____

(Documentation must be provided supporting tuition and/or books, employer's reimbursement policy and enrollment in school.)
(Please label as Attachment D.)

PART 2 – EDUCATION BACKGROUND

Highest Level of Education Attained _____
School _____
GPA _____ Degree _____ Major _____

(Documentation must be provided documenting Grade Point Average)

PART 3 – PROFESSIONAL CAREER

Employment History (List employment history as **Attachment A.**)

PART 4 – COMMUNITY AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Please describe your civic and professional activities and contributions to your community, profession, HFMA or other organizations. **(Please label as Attachment B.)**

PART 5 - ESSAY

Please submit an essay describing your educational and professional goals and how this scholarship will assist you in achieving such goals. **(Please label as Attachment C.)**

PART 6 - REFERENCES

Please furnish three formal reference letters

SIGNATURE _____ **DATE** _____

Please return completed package no later than March 1, 2026 to:

Maria Facciponti at NJHFMA@aol.com or mail to:
Chair Scholarship Committee, NJHFMA
Healthcare Financial Mgmt. Assoc. - NJ Chapter
PO Box 6422
Bridgewater, NJ 08807

Breaking Barriers in Healthcare Finance: Sehrish Mazhar's Mission-Driven Leadership

An exclusive interview with a visionary finance leader transforming healthcare access in New Jersey's underserved communities



Fatimah Muhammad

By: Fatimah Muhammad, FHFMA

In a small conference room in Tribeca, New York, Sehrish Mazhar, Director of Finance and Revenue Cycle at Henry J. Austin Health Center, speaks with the kind of passion that comes from understanding both the numbers behind healthcare and the human stories they represent. As Director of Finance and Revenue Cycle for a large federally qualified health center (FQHC) that includes a 340B program, Mazhar has spent over a decade navigating the complex intersection of mission-driven care and financial sustainability.

"My healthcare journey began over a decade ago, and it's been really rooted in mission-driven work from the start," she explains, her voice carrying the conviction of someone who sees each financial decision as directly impacting patient lives. What started as a clinical interest evolved into something deeper, a calling to ensure that healthcare's business side serves its most fundamental purpose: caring for those who need it most.

The Evolution of a Healthcare Finance Leader

Mazhar's path to healthcare finance wasn't traditional. Unlike many who enter the field with predetermined career goals, her journey was organic, shaped by opportunities to lead and a growing understanding of where she could make the most significant impact. "I've always been interested in healthcare, but initially it was the clinical aspect," she recalls. "Early on in my career, I just happened to land roles in leadership positions where I was

a supervisor, then a manager, and then started leading smaller and larger multi-specialty organizations."

It wasn't until graduate school that the pieces clicked into place. "I figured out where I belong," she says. "For me, it's about making a difference in the community. My core values are really focused on underserved populations and leaving a legacy or impacting healthcare in a way that is valuable."

This mission-driven approach has proven essential as she navigates one of the most challenging periods in healthcare finance history.

Navigating New Jersey's Unique Healthcare Landscape

From Mazhar's perspective, New Jersey presents distinct challenges that set it apart from neighboring states. "Unlike New York, which has a more established public hospital infrastructure, New Jersey's safety net providers, including FQHCs, carry a disproportionate share of uncompensated care without the equivalent systemic support."

This reality influences every financial decision her organization makes. The

payer mix in the Trenton area, mainly Medicaid or uninsured populations, creates margin pressures that demand creative solutions. "Unlike hospitals that are in more commercially insured areas, the margins are thin, and fluctuations in Medicaid policy significantly impact operations," she notes. However, Mazhar is quick to highlight one of New Jersey's



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unique advantages. “The positive thing in New Jersey for FQHCs is that there is an uncompensated care program, which is a huge plus, and other states don’t have that. For any uninsured patients that are seen, we basically submit a letter of agreement monthly where the state provides us with funds to cover those services.”

Federal Uncertainty and Local Innovation

The specter of federal funding uncertainty hangs over every FQHC leader’s decisions, and Mazhar is no exception. “Definitely the most pressing issue is the funding uncertainty with the new federal administration,” she states bluntly. “The future of healthcare center grants, 340B protections, and Medicaid waivers is unclear. We saw that a couple of months ago, where there was a letter sent to FQHCs that paused funding, and that significantly impacted FQHCs across the board.”

Mazhar is referring to the memorandum issued by the Office of Management and Budget that temporarily paused federal funding. Although it was later rescinded, she notes that such a pause would have had devastating consequences. “Many FQHCs likely wouldn’t have been able to make payroll,” she explains, “and that really underscores just how vulnerable our safety-net providers are to federal funding disruptions.”

But uncertainty breeds innovation, and Mazhar’s approach to sustainability goes beyond traditional financial metrics. “For FQHCs, we evaluate financial health using both traditional and mission-aligned metrics,” she explains. “In addition to tracking your operating margin and days in accounts receivable, we monitor trends in uninsured patient visits as well as the sustainability of funding and shifts in patient coverage tied to Medicaid determinations.”

The Change Healthcare Crisis: A Defining Moment

The Change Healthcare cyberattack in March 2024 represented one of the most challenging periods in Mazhar’s career. The attack crippled revenue cycle operations across the healthcare industry, but for FQHCs operating on thin margins, the impact was particularly severe.

“It was challenging because you have limitations with the partners that you have in your EMR system, and you’re relying on them without having visibility,” Mazhar recalls. “The challenges we faced were not having access to our clearinghouse because of the proprietary system that they have for the EMR system. We had no visibility and we’re just relying on the EMR system to say, ‘Oh no, we’re taking care of it and we’re connecting with other clearinghouses to resolve the issue.’”

The experience taught valuable lessons about resilience and the importance of proactive management. “It took months and a lot of time and resources and money that we had spent. The proactiveness and staying on top of it was critical to really

understand what the financial impact had been,” she reflects.

Workforce Challenges and Creative Solutions

One of Mazhar’s biggest headaches isn’t numbers, it’s the staffing shortage. The workforce shortage in revenue cycle roles has created unprecedented challenges, particularly as organizations return to full-time, in-office work. “Workforce shortages are particularly challenging in revenue cycle roles, especially billing and coding roles now that we’re going back into the workplace full time,” she explains. “These roles are even more challenging to fill, and staff are hard to retain because all these things could be done remotely.”

The solution, she believes, lies in reimagining workforce expectations and development. Her organization has invested in cross-training and creating career pathways that keep talent engaged while building internal expertise.

The Front-Line Finance Challenge

Mazhar doesn’t shy away from discussing one of healthcare’s most persistent problems: expecting front-line staff to handle increasingly complex financial interactions. “You have your frontline staff that is probably the highest turnover, lowest paid, but you expect them to register patients correctly, collect balances, check out patients, and ensure follow-up appointments are made,” she points out.

This reality shapes her approach to staff development and process improvement. “Managing patients as they transition between coverage types, whether they’re Medicaid, uninsured, or fall on a sliding fee scale, is so complex, both administratively and financially. That’s one of the biggest challenges because you have to have highly trained staff to guide patients through these shifts while minimizing service disruption.”

Innovation Through Community Partnership

Despite the challenges, Mazhar remains optimistic about innovative approaches to sustainability. Her organization has developed creative community outreach programs that serve dual purposes: improving population health while strengthening financial performance.

“We provide health screenings and have mobile clinics doing free or low-cost screenings like blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol, and dental health,” she explains. “We’ve also expanded hours with our healthcare center to provide greater access to care and really partner with communities by being mobile and deploying in areas where you need to increase access to primary care and preventative care.”

The organization has also pioneered practical solutions to social determinants of health. “We provide transportation solutions to get our patients from one location to another to improve the continuity of care. We also deliver prescriptions for our patients right to their door so that they’re able to continue taking their medication.”

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Technology and the Human Touch

Mazhar approaches technology implementation with the understanding that tools must serve people, not replace them. “EHR systems are both a blessing and a challenge,” she notes. “While they help us improve documentation and enable us to track quality metrics for funding purposes, implementation costs are high and integration with external systems remains very inconsistent, particularly with behavioral health services, pharmacy services, and laboratory services.”

Her pragmatic approach extends to revenue cycle automation. “The greatest ROI could come from helping reduce denials and improving patient financial engagement through automation and data tools, especially in the revenue cycle space.”

Looking Forward: Policy and Preparedness

When asked about preparing for future policy changes, Mazhar’s response reflects the strategic thinking that has defined her career. “FQHCs will need to build agility into their financial models to withstand political and economic shifts. Scenario planning, grant diversification, and advocacy are going to be crucial going forward.”

She sees the role of healthcare finance professionals evolving rapidly. “For future finance professionals, especially in safety net organizations, you really need to have cross-functional expertise and need to understand reimbursement models, policy, patient engagement, and community impact all at once.”

The Sleepless Nights and Strategic Solutions

When pressed about what keeps her up at night, Mazhar’s answer is telling: “What keeps me up at night is whether we’re building systems agile enough to withstand the policy shifts that come with every new administration. With the current changes—whether it’s new funding models, 340B scrutiny, or evolving Medicaid policies—finance leaders have to be more than reactive. We need to be proactive, adaptable, and still centered in our mission. It’s not just about preparing the numbers; it’s about making sure our teams and processes can weather uncertainty while staying rooted in values and purpose.”

But she’s not just identifying problems, she’s building solutions. Her top advice for emerging leaders focuses on three strategic actions that drive meaningful, lasting improvement:

1- “Build crosswalks between teams—then lead the conversations” She emphasizes the power of a cross-functional revenue integrity team: “There’s such a disconnect and many silos across organizations. Real fixes happen at the intersection. Get your billing, coding, clinical, front-end and IT teams talking in the same room. That’s where breakthroughs start”

2-Don’t Wait for the Fires—Design for Prevention. Reactive

problem-solving can only take you so far. Proactively design audit routines, payer policy trackers, and denial mitigation playbooks. Push for automation where it makes sense—but only after the workflow is clearly defined and optimized. Technology doesn’t fix broken processes—it amplifies them.

3-Know Your Data Cold—But Make It Actionable. Data is only powerful when it drives change. Don’t just report on KPIs; interpret them. Use trending data to drive operational decisions, from staffing models to payer negotiations. For example: Don’t just say “denials are up 12%”—show why, where, and what fix you’re implementing. That’s how insights become impactful.

Beyond Numbers: The Mission Imperative

Perhaps what sets Mazhar apart is her unwavering focus on the mission behind the numbers. “Healthcare inequities are both a financial and moral imperative,” she states firmly. “To make meaningful progress, we need state-level funding tied to outcomes that reflect social determinants of health and not just encounter volume.”

This perspective shapes every aspect of her leadership. “For policymakers, I’d recommend prioritizing long-term funding stability, simplifying administrative burdens, and investing in infrastructure that supports both digital health and health equity. For FQHCs, these are not luxuries; they are our lifelines.”

Mazhar’s approach goes beyond driving performance metrics—it’s about leading with integrity.

“In fast-paced environments, it’s easy to get caught up in numbers, deadlines, and decisions,” she reflects. “But I never want to lose my authenticity in the process of driving financial performance. How we lead matters just as much as what we achieve.”

She believes that authenticity in leadership isn’t just a value, it’s a compass. Especially in healthcare, where every financial decision touches a life, authenticity builds trust, fosters transparency, and keeps leaders grounded in purpose.

“I want to be a leader who builds trust, speaks truthfully, and stays rooted in values no matter the organization or situation.”

A Legacy in the Making

As our conversation draws to a close, it becomes clear that Mazhar represents a new generation of healthcare finance leaders; professionals who understand that sustainability isn’t just about margins and cash flow, but about building systems resilient enough to serve communities through any crisis.

“COVID taught us that financial preparedness is not just about having reserves,” she reflects. “It’s about really being nimble. Whether it’s supply chain disruptions, emergency care demand, or funding gaps, organizations must plan for

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Certification Corner: Two Certification Study Halls Support Finance Professionals in 2025

This year, finance professionals preparing for CRCR and CHFP certifications benefited from two highly successful virtual study hall series, each offering expert guidance, structured learning, and a supportive peer community.

Summer Session: CRCR Study Hall

Held every Thursday from July 10 to August 14, 2025, the CRCR Summer Study Hall brought together 250 registrants—including 37 members from New Jersey—for a six-week deep dive into all CRCR exam domains. Each one-hour session offered 1 CPE credit and covered essential topics such as healthcare finance fundamentals, financial analysis, accounting and reporting, and reimbursement methodologies. Participants also engaged in real-time Q&A with an experienced certification professional, gaining both clarity and confidence. The weekly format provided accountability and encouragement, helping attendees stay focused on their certification goals.

Fall Session: CHFP Study Hall

From November 6 to December 11, 2025, the CHFP Study Hall series returned with a five-week intensive program hosted by the Georgia Chapter in collaboration with chapters across the country, including New Jersey. Members from 18 chapters registered, with six participants joining from NJ. Each one-hour virtual session delivered focused preparation on CHFP exam content, expert insights from a seasoned CHFP professional, and opportunities to ask questions in real time. Designed to help participants “conquer the CHFP in five weeks,” the series emphasized structured guidance, peer motivation, and a comprehensive review of all key exam domains.

Both study halls highlighted how collaboration, community, and expert guidance can help healthcare finance professionals succeed in their certification journey.

Mark Your Calendar

NJ HFMA Post Holiday “Ditch the Diet” Networking Event

January 13, 2026

Chickie’s & Pete’s, Marlton, NJ

Annual PFS/PAS Meeting

January 22, 2026

APA Hotel, Iselin, NJ

Annual Women’s Leadership & Development Session

April 22, 2026

DoubleTree Hotel, Tinton Falls, NJ

Annual Golf Outing

May 7, 2026

Mercer Oaks, West Windsor Township, NJ

New Jersey & Metro Philadelphia HFMA 50th Anniversary Annual Institute

October 21 – 23, 2026

The Borgata Hotel & Casino, Atlantic City, NJ

Watch for updates on all of these events, or visit the Chapter website at hfmanj.org

Control the Noise

By: Lisa Hammett



Lisa Hammett

Do you ever feel like your brain is so full of noise that you can't focus? There is the ongoing checklist of To-Do's that are never completed, making you feel defeated. Worries about politics, finances, family demands, and work responsibilities create ongoing stress and anxiety. The news, social media, as well as other people's opinions and expectations, contribute to the noise. These factors make it difficult to remain positive. Throw the upcoming holidays into the mix and it's a recipe for burnout.

I've had to learn how to manage my thoughts in order to remain positive, productive, and stress-free. This includes releasing unrealistic, perfectionistic tendencies.

As humans, we have a tendency to hold ourselves to a higher standard than others. We lose sight of the fact that we're not invincible. This is a sure fire way to reach burnout.

When I find my brain full of noise, including an unrealistic checklist of expectations, I recognize it's time for a reset. If this resonates with you, here are some tips for letting go of noise:

Practice Mental Fitness

In my latest book, *From Burnout to Best Life, Sustainable Strategies for a Healthy Mind & Body*, I take a deep dive into this topic. When we're mentally fit, we're able to respond to life's challenges with a positive mindset. By engaging your senses (ex: smell, taste, touch, sound, or sight) in a series of micro-meditations, we can shift negative thoughts to the positive.

- Imagine holding a steaming mug of tea or coffee, letting the aroma fill your nostrils. Taste the beverage, noticing the flavor profile as it fills your mouth. Feel the warmth of the liquid as you swallow. Also, notice the warmth of the mug in your hands, as well as the texture.

- Rub your fingers over an article of clothing and notice the texture of the fabric. I find, rubbing my index finger and thumb together to be very effective. Notice the fingertip ridges of your fingers as well as the temperature. Are your fingertips dry or smooth?
- Listen intently to the sounds around you, starting with the farthest away sound. Then, change your focus to a closer sound. Eventually, notice the sound of your breath.
- Look at an object in front of you. Focus intently on the object's details. Notice colors, shapes, textures, maybe a reflection in the surface.

Pray

If you're spiritual, pray. The act of letting go and surrendering toxic emotions to a higher being is freeing and comforting.

Listen to Soothing Music

Listening to soothing music can help quiet the brain and calm the central nervous system.

Take a Warm Bath or Shower

This can be particularly beneficial when incorporated into a bedtime routine, to promote a restful night's sleep.

Do a Brain Dump

Grab a piece of paper and write down all the thoughts that are swirling in your head. They don't have to make sense. Jot them down anyway. This is a great practice to add to an evening routine.

Go Outside

Going outdoors is a natural mood elevator, regardless if it's sunny or cloudy. The combination of the natural light and fresh air rejuvenates the senses.

Go for a Walk

A 10-15 minute walk can clear your head and improve circulation. Incorporating mental fitness techniques can

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volatility.”

Her advice for her peers is both practical and inspirational: “Be the voice of strategy, not just stewardship. Translate finance risks into organizational action. Bring solutions, not just reports, to the table.”

In an era of unprecedented challenges for healthcare finance, leaders like Sehrish Mazhar are not just managing through crisis; they’re reimagining what’s possible when mission and margin work together. Her story reminds us that behind every successful healthcare organization is a finance leader who understands that numbers have names and every decision can change lives.

But for Mazhar, legacy isn’t only measured in outcomes or balance sheets. It’s also about the culture she builds along the way. “I often wonder if I’m creating the kind of work environment I needed earlier in my career, one where people

feel seen, supported, and challenged. Where emerging leaders, especially those who look like me, know they belong at the table,” she shares. “Because financial strategy is only part of the job. Shaping culture and lifting others as you lead? That’s the legacy.”

As she continues to break barriers and create paths for others to follow, Mazhar ensures that no stone is left unturned in the pursuit of optimized care and organizational sustainability. In the complex world of healthcare finance, that kind of leadership isn’t just valuable— it’s essential.

About the author

Fatimah Muhammad, FHFMA is Director of 340B Pharmaceutical Services and Drug Replacement at Saint Peter’s University Hospital. She can be reached at fmuhammad@saintpetersuh.com.

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rejuvenate your mind while walking will rejuvenate your body. Focus on all the different sounds you can hear – passing cars, chirping birds, lawn mowers, airplanes, Amazon trucks. Next, focus on what you can see, noticing colors, shapes, tiny details, etc.

Call a Supportive Friend, Colleague, or Family Member

Having the right support can provide mental clarity, keep you focused on the right things, and make you feel like you’re not alone.

Savor a Cup of Hot Herbal Tea

Try to avoid caffeinated beverages when you’re really stressed or overwhelmed. Caffeine can increase anxiety. Herbal or ginger tea are great alternatives. Herbal tea is soothing while ginger and turmeric teas aid in digestion, calming the gut.

Practice Visualization

Close your eyes and visualize that you’re in your happy place. Notice the surroundings, people, buildings, landscape, etc. Is there a warm breeze caressing your skin? Do you hear birds chirping or waves crashing? What do you smell? Spend a few minutes in your happy place and then slowly open your eyes.

Avoid Brain Stimulants

As previously mentioned, caffeinated beverages can further activate the brain. Other things to avoid or limit access to

are television and social media, processed sugar, and alcohol. Alcohol is actually a depressant. It may relax you temporarily but will increase your anxiety in the long run. It can also prevent you from getting a good night’s rest.

These practices are forms of self-care, which is essential to overall health and well-being. When we take time to care for ourselves, reducing the noise, we can better care for others and be the best version of ourselves.

Call to Action:

What forms of self-care will you try, to quiet the noise that is generating stress and overwhelm?

About the Author:

Lisa Hammett is a relatable transformational keynote and TEDx speaker, a 2X international best-selling author, a Positive Intelligence PQ Certified Coach & Trainer, a wellness expert, and a champion for obliterating burnout in healthcare and HR. She reached burnout after 26 years in the corporate retail sector. After a transformative health and wellness journey, where she lost 65 pounds, Lisa decided to dedicate her life to helping others achieve their health and wellness objectives. She has empowered thousands of individuals to make sustainable, healthy lifestyle changes. She can be reached at info@lisahammett.com.

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POST HOLIDAY NETWORKING

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**Chickie's & Pete's
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Data Analytics for Healthcare Strategic Planning: A Physician Strategy Perspective



Chris Marr

By: Chris Marr

Strategic planning in today's healthcare environment requires more than historical trends and executive intuition. Rising labor costs, shifting reimbursement structures, competitive physician recruitment, and widening performance variability between practices have made growth, especially growth with healthy financial sustainability, difficult. Data analytics has become an essential tool for healthcare leaders to drive healthy growth. Nowhere is this clearer than in physician strategy, where data-driven insights can offer crucial insights on alignment, acquisition strategy, network optimization, and performance improvement.

Q: Why is data analytics increasingly critical for physician alignment strategy?

CFOs and strategy leaders are facing unprecedented pressure to align physicians in ways that strengthen market relevance, expand access, and support service line growth. Traditional qualitative assessments are no longer sufficient.

Data analytics allows organizations to:

- Quantify physician need by specialty and market using demand forecasting and population modeling
- Find opportunities for performance improvement
- Precisely calculate ideal staffing levels
- Assess physician contribution to margin, quality, and access
- Target partnerships or employment based on objective performance and market opportunity

In short, analytics can transform a reactive process into a confident growth plan.

Q: How can analytics help identify physician practices that are strong acquisition candidates?

Analytics can highlight high-value targets by evaluating the following. Most important, however, is to not just assess current performance but what performance would look like with data-driven performance improvement initiatives.

- Productivity and panel performance
- Referral patterns and outmigration risk

- Cost structure and revenue cycle efficiency
- Market share and geographic coverage gaps
- Financial performance

Utilizing internal and external data helps determine which practices support strategic goals and therefore prioritized for partnership or acquisition.

Q: How do organizations use performance analytics to improve the physician enterprise post-acquisition?

Post-acquisition analytics can help organizations:

- Identify cost issues
- Improve access and scheduling
- Optimize revenue cycle
- Align provider incentives with organizational goals
- Benchmark performance against standards to identify

low hanging opportunities

Organizations that use analytics during integration often see improvements in productivity, growth, and margin within 3–24 months.

Q: What steps can health systems take to strengthen their data-driven physician strategy?

Organizations should:

- Develop unified data infrastructure
- Include advanced data analytics as a cornerstone of strategic planning
- Build partnerships to ensure the necessary experience and expertise

Strategic planning supported by financial and performance analytics enables clear, defensible decisions that drive growth, improve physician alignment, and strengthen sustainability.

About the author

Chris Marrs is a Senior Manager, Healthcare with Withum. He can be reached at cmarrs@withum.com.

JOIN OUR TEAM!

Associate Board Member Wanted

Are you driven, innovative, and committed to promoting the healthcare financial management field?

The NJ Chapter of HFMA is currently seeking individuals interested in becoming an Associate Member of the Board of Directors.

Requirements:

- Current membership in HFMA, with New Jersey chapter selected as your primary chapter
- Membership in HFMA 5 years or less
- A referral from a senior administrator in your organization
- A letter stating why you are interested in the position
- Copy of your resume
- Willingness and ability to attend the majority of monthly board meetings, second Tuesday of the month, 7:30am
- Participation in a New Jersey Chapter Committee

The Associate Board Member is a two year appointment, starting June 1, 2026. There are two positions available.

Interested? Submit the above listed requirements to Laura Hess at njhfm@aol.com

SUBMIT BY:
January 23,
2026

Holiday Social Recap



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HFMA NEW JERSEY PRESENTS

2026 GOLF CLASSIC

Thursday, May 7, 2026

11:30 AM - REGISTRATION, LUNCH BUFFET

1:00 PM - SHOTGUN START

3:30 PM - GOLF CLINIC

*5:30 PM - COCKTAIL HOUR, HORS D'OEUVRES,
DINNER WITH OPEN BAR*

Mercer Oaks Golf Club – East Course
West Windsor, NJ

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