



CCRA RECORD

INTERVIEW WITH A NEW CTR

1. Why did you pick Cancer Registry as a profession and how did you learn about us?

A few years ago, I had taken some time off for family reasons and was seeking a second career that would allow me to work remotely and have a more flexible schedule. Given my background in biology and experience working in healthcare, a family member suggested that I consider a career as a certified tumor registrar. I had never heard of this profession and was intrigued to learn more about it. After doing some research, I felt that this would be a great fit for me. I was very interested in learning about oncology and wanted to play a role in collecting quality cancer data for research, epidemiology, and cancer control.

I learned about CCRA from my practicum supervisor who encouraged me to visit the CCRA website and provided me with information about the CCRA Annual Education Meeting. I'm very excited to be a new member of CCRA!

2. What CIM Program did you complete and how was the experience?

I completed the Santa Barbara City College CIM Program and had a great experience. The program was very flexible, since all the courses were online and asynchronous. One of the best experiences I had in the program was visiting a cancer registry, which allowed me to meet an experienced CTR and learn more about the profession. It was also very helpful to gain experience abstracting in cancer registry software as part of the curriculum. While online learning requires quite a bit of independent study, it was nice to have opportunities to connect with other students by working on projects and by joining a study group.

3. What about your practicum experience, how did that work out?

Despite some COVID-19 restrictions in 2021, I was fortunate to have an in-person practicum experience at a local medical center. My practicum supervisor prepared a very comprehensive training for me in all the areas required by NCRA. The most valuable parts of my practicum were having the opportunity to learn from my supervisor and other mentors and receiving hands-on training with the EMR and registry software to abstract 15 cases. In addition, my supervisor taught me about several aspects of CoC accreditation, and I was able to attend virtual cancer conferences and a cancer committee meeting. Other mentors at the facility shared how casefinding and follow-up are performed and how data is submitted to the central registry. It was a great experience to see firsthand how a cancer registry operates, and it really enhanced what I had learned in my CIM classes.

4. What about your exam experience and how did you get started in the profession after passing it?

December 2023

After completing my CIM certificate program in December 2021, I had three months to prepare to sit for the CTR exam the following March. I spent time reviewing information from the *Cancer Registry Management* textbook and studying the Missouri State Tumor Registrars Association (MoSTRA) CTR Prep Book. The NAACCR CTR Exam Prep and Review highlighted several important areas and provided good practice questions. To prepare for the open-book portion of the exam, I worked on exercises in SEER Educate and studied the examples in the CTR Guide to Coding Radiation. Also, it was very helpful to meet with my study group to stay on track in my exam preparation. We established goals and reviewed material together.

Regarding how I got started in the profession, when I was a student, I looked at CTR job listings and noticed that many of them required at least two years of experience. I wasn't sure how I would be able to gain that experience until I came upon a social media post about the Registry Partners Internship Program, which is designed to educate and train new CTRs to become high-quality abstractors. I registered on their website to receive updates on the Internship Program (<https://www.registrypartners.com/careers/internships/>). While I was preparing to take the CTR exam, I received an email notification that they were accepting applications. I immediately applied and was very happy to be selected for the

program. The fully remote program started with a few weeks of education on the five major sites and practice abstracting these sites. After the initial training, I began working on casefinding and abstracting for a multi-facility project. Throughout the one-year program, I worked closely with mentors who helped me improve my text documentation skills, provided me with helpful resources for abstracting, and reviewed my abstracts to provide me with constructive feedback and to ensure that high-quality data was being submitted to NCDB and/or the state. My mentors provided extensive education on many additional sites as well. The Registry Partners Internship Program was the perfect way to start my career as a CTR by building on what I had learned as a student and developing and improving my abstraction skills.

5. This Internship Program looks like it has limited openings at a given time, so have you heard from any of your former study group friends about any difficulties they are having finding entry level opportunities?

All three of my study group friends were able to start working in a registry about one to two months after they first started applying for positions. Two of my friends are working in hospital registries, and one is working in a central registry.



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