



Compliance

TODAY

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A strong moral compass

an interview with Leslie Caldwell

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by Kelly M. Willenberg, DBA, RN, CCRP, CHRC, CHC

Compliance lessons from living it

Kelly M. Willenberg (Kelly@kellywillenberg.com) is President and CEO of Kelly Willenberg, LLC in Chesnee, SC.

My husband passed away tragically because of a hit-and-run on his bicycle June 29th. An avid bicyclist, he commuted to his anesthetist job every day for over 20 years. The whirlwind of emotions from his sudden death has been difficult, to say the least. However, realizing the compliance piece as a patient or family member was eye opening for me.



Willenberg

A hospital must have procedures in place from notification of next of kin, to who can see a patient. There is a human aspect that I think those of us in Compliance fail to understand, because we are not seeing patients in many instances. From not providing information to my daughter about my husband's injuries, when she arrived 90 minutes before me; to not allowing me to sit in a reserved, quiet area because of a hospital "rule" when I was told he was brain dead, was disheartening. I realize they were following rules, but it was hard to understand at that point in time.

As I made a quick decision to donate his organs and was faced with all of the compliance steps that would take place, I quickly realized the need for important consideration of my family. From a quiet place for consenting, to the delicate situation of handling my husband, who was an "employee" and all of the staff knew him, the pieces of HIPAA thrown at me were remarkable. There is a

downside to knowing too much and the loss of control from this side, though. As research compliance professionals, we sometimes look at the heightened risks and fail to consider the "real" day-to-day process that is occurring in a hospital. From the suddenness of a diagnosis and consent, to the appropriate governance with respect to privacy and decision rights, living it suddenly makes you appreciate compliance and transparency even more.

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Even though my husband is gone and the process was grueling during his brief stay in Neuro ICU, I am confident in how I approached his death. Donating his organs so others could have life and my loved one's tissue for research gave me some comfort. It was not about the rudeness of a person in the ICU waiting room or a staff member who spoke such broken English, I was frightened because I could not understand him; the compliance protection was there when my husband died. I now have a true appreciation for what it is like for the staff who are doing the job, and how amazingly difficult enterprise-wide compliance can be. ☺