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Alumna Excels in Health-Care Field

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University Alumna Jennifer Van Dyke '99 was recently featured for her work as a Process Improvement Leader at Northwestern Memorial Hospital (NMH). An Economics and Business Administration double major while at IWU, Van Dyke applies economic methods known as “Six Sigma” to improve hospital outcomes.

NMH credits Van Dyke for assisting with reducing a hospital complication, known as deep vein thrombosis, by more than 50 percent hospital-wide last year. Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot that forms in a deep vein in the body, often occurring in the lower leg or thigh. DVT can lead to pulmonary embolism and is potentially fatal.

In order to reduce the likelihood that patients will develop these blood clots, Van Dyke worked with a team of doctors, nurses and pharmacists to develop a hospital protocol to help prevent this complication. Van Dyke spent hours in the operating room observing surgeries to better understand the problem.

“This was one of my first clinical projects. I couldn’t believe I was in scrubs in an operating room,” she said, “Once I got over the initial shock, I was fascinated by the surgeries. And it’s funny, because in college I was the one watching ER with my eyes closed.”

Van Dyke came to NMH in 2007, after working as a healthcare revenue cycle consultant for Arthur Andersen and BearingPoint.

Her success in the health-care field, Van Dyke believes, is partly attributable to IWU for bestowing her with what she calls a flexible thought process. “In my liberal arts education I had to take classes outside my major and outside my comfort zone,” she said, “This prepared me for my job, because everyday it takes me into something new.”

Van Dyke says she wouldn’t have it any other way. “At the end of the day I know that my work helps people. Even on the hardest of days, I can go home and feel like I’ve made an impact.”

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