

Memorial Resolution - Carla Phillips

I had the privilege of hiring Carla in 2003 to work for the Minimal Risk Institutional Review Board (IRB). She was the first staff reviewer for that committee and set a high standard. It was clear from her interview that she was someone I must have as part of my team, because of her wit and ability to connect with others. During her 9 year tenure with the IRB Carla reviewed over 1500 studies, which gives a sense of the number of study teams whose lives she made easier. She was also assigned some of the most complicated studies because of her technical and interpersonal skills. Carla represented the best of what academic staff offer at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Working for an IRB can be a challenge, because these committees perform a function that some researchers perceive as at odds with their goals and IRB staff are usually the recipients of expressions of this viewpoint. Moreover, with changes in regulations or at least shifts in their interpretation, researchers can find themselves entangled in regulatory intricacies they were unlikely prepared to encounter. Who could possibly help frustrated and stuck researchers? Carla Phillips, IRB staff reviewer extraordinaire! Carla could take a beastly research study with snarly regulatory assessments and turn it into a pussy cat for the IRB to embrace. Carla could defuse frustrated researchers and guide those lost in the regulatory maze with her smile, kindness, patience and humor. Many in the research community clamored for their studies to be assigned to Carla because they felt she understood their needs and would take care of them. To her IRB colleagues Carla was the one you could count on to know the answer, help you think through a tough problem, or sympathize when you had a difficult day.

Because the IRB Office is well-versed from its review of oncology research in what the consequences of having cancer and the current limits of cancer treatments are, a collective worry for Carla grew amongst her colleagues when she was initially diagnosed 5 years ago with multiple myeloma. We had a hard time with the concept that someone so young and vibrant might be taken away from us much sooner than imagined. For many of her colleagues Carla's death was a shock because she did not share the depth of her illness with others and carried on trying to function as a full member of the staff until close to her death on July 6th.

Carla's absence has been felt by many. In addition to her experience and the excellent work she performed for the Health Sciences IRBs Office, her colleagues and I will miss her:

- Humor – often deadpan and wonderfully absurd
- Talent with food – many recipes were demanded
- Love of reading – many books were exchanged
- Connection with the community – who didn't she know?
- Stories about her wonderful family – Bob, Robby, and Nimi as well as her furry children Danny, Nelson, and Lily
- Interest in a wide range of topics – from yoga to David Hasselhoff to mini pigs
- Disdain of kelly green – the consequence of having a birthday on March 17th
- Ability to make you feel better – she was a mom to many of us

Carla's family and friends showed the best of what humans can be in their support of her throughout her illness and under difficult circumstances. In addition to remembering Carla, I want to honor the example they set of the extraordinary kindness.

Respectfully submitted

Nichelle Cobb, Director of the Health Sciences IRBs Office