

Backgrounder

Student stories featured in *Too Cool For School Too* (pages 30-44)

Sara Wright

Age: mid-30s, 3 young children

Debt: \$17,000

Entered the program with the expectation of being able to secure a higher-paying hospital job. Managed to find employment in a hospital as a data entry clerk for \$19 an hour – a position she could have had with only a high school diploma. Unable to find the money to take the Canadian Healthcare Association (CHA) exam-preparation program and concerned about finding her own field placements, a requirement of the CHA program.

Nicole Solomon

Age: 20

Debt: \$20,000

Pinned her hopes on working in a hospital medical records department and considered leaving when she discovered Cambrian's program was not CHIMA-recognized, but was convinced to stay. Unable to find a hospital position because of her lack of CHIMA certification; works part-time in a general store for \$10 an hour.

Melissa Monahan **Age: 22**

Discovered during her hospital placement that the Cambrian program was not CHIMA-recognized. When she confronted Cambrian she was told that the college was “working on” CHIMA recognition and was asked not to share what she had discovered with her classmates (she did, and was summoned to the Dean's office). Withdrew from Cambrian, spent the next year working to pay off her debt, then entered the CHIMA-recognized program at Sir Sandford Fleming College. None of her Cambrian credits were transferable.

Jennifer Renaud **Age: 21**

Entered the program after hearing the co-ordinator speak about the high demand for Health Information Management professionals. Held out by the college president as an example of a successful HIM graduate. Works as an administrative statistician – a job she says has nothing to do with Health Information Management. Attempted to take the CHA course but found it too difficult to balance with a full-time job.

Christie Charette **Age 29, 2 young children**

Debt: \$25,200

Remained unemployed after graduating and had to borrow money from family to take the CHA course.

Kristine Landry **Age: 21**

Debt: \$25,000

Found a placement in a hospital but it didn't involve health records or coding. Now works as a temporary clerk at a credit union. Borrowed tuition money from her grandmother to attempt the CHA course, but found it too difficult and dropped out, obtaining only a partial refund.

Julie Carriere

Age: 22

Debt: \$17,000

Entered the Cambrian program with a background in laboratory work. When she asked about CHIMA recognition, was told to “be patient” and that it “would happen.” Secured a job in a hospital but was removed from doing coding when the hospital realized the Cambrian program was not CHIMA-recognized. Continued to work in the hospital in other areas and is currently working in HIM on the condition that she completes the CHA course, for which she incurred more debt.

Matthew Barney

2 young children

Debt: \$7,500

Was convinced not to withdraw from the program after the co-ordinator assured him the college was working on CHIMA recognition. Was repeatedly rejected for Health Information Management positions. Currently taking the CHA course online.

Danielle Smith

Age: 22

Debt: \$30,000

Considered leaving Cambrian when she found out it was not CHIMA-recognized, but was convinced to stay. Her placement led to a federal student-hiring program. Works in a records office at Health Canada – but involving corporate records, not Health Information Management. With substantial debt, she is unable to find the money for further education.

Dina Peltier

1 young child

Initially considered Sir Sandford Fleming’s program; chose Cambrian because it was closer to home. Arranged on her own to take CHA course prior to Cambrian’s offer. Working at a health centre on Manitoulin Island on the condition that she becomes CHIMA-certified.

Sheena Xavier

Age: 22

Debt: \$9,000

Attempted the CHA online course but withdrew because it was too difficult. Now working part-time at a clothing store.