

Podcast Transcript

Risk Never Sleeps

Episode 125

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz

Ed Gaudet: Welcome to the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast, in which we learn about the people that are on the front lines, delivering and protecting patient care. I'm Ed Gaudet, the host of our program, and I am pleased to be joined today by Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz, director of information security and privacy at the UChicago Medicine Organization. So let's start off with sharing a little bit about your current role and organisation with listeners.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: Absolutely. Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure to be here. So I'm currently at the University of Chicago Medicine. So we are a nonprofit academic medical health system, which basically, we have several hospitals, we have outpatient clinics, specialty care facilities, physician practices, all across Chicago, its suburbs, and now recently expanding to Northwest Indiana. So I had the opportunity to step into the GRC director role as recently as last November. So I'm leading the team in India efforts of, you know, supporting internal and external audits, policies, procedures, standards, exceptions to those standards. Right? Because not always we get everything perfect. So there's going to be always exceptions. We also focus heavily on managing third-party risk, security awareness training, and anything, you know, regulatory compliance from a privacy perspective.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. And I did a check on your background to learn a little more about where you've been on so far in your journey. And I really love your background as it's prepared you for this role. You've been an analyst. You've also, I believe you spent some time at the operations center, the security, the SOC.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: That's correct. That's how I got started. So when I was doing, I was getting my master's degree in Information Technology and Management, basically, at the end of the first year, I had the great opportunity to intern for UChicago Medicine. So I was on the security operations side. So like more technical hands on skills. And then at the end, you know, I was expressing, I'm talking to my managers at the time, Hey, you know, like I would love to have the opportunity to continue working here. It's a great place to continue learning. But unfortunately, there was not really like a position open. But, you know, we had recently acquired Ingalls Memorial, which is a smaller community health hospital that was in the South Side of Chicago, and they had a spot open. So I had the opportunity to transition over to Ingalls in their information security office. And then, you know, I, you know, continued working for the organization. I went from, as well I was technical part as well. I remember one of the first projects they gave me was like, Hey, you need to stand up the vulnerability management program. We don't have, you know, something really mature. So this is your little project to start. So that was very fun. And then I went into like more like third-party risk as well, more on the GRC compliance side. And then with, you know, the whole merger and acquisition and the shared services, both information security offices that UChicago and Ingalls kind of like combined into one. And that's when I transitioned to the GRC team at the University of Chicago. And honestly, I think it was around Covid like in 2020, early like in early 2020, I think it was. And then I've been there, you know, like doing different things, exposed to different things, learning from from great leaders.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, you've had the good fortune to work for some really great leaders and talented individuals. And I believe Eric Decker was there when you were there.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: That's correct. Yeah. Eric Baker was the CISO when I was an intern already, and he is the one who told me, Hey, there may be an opportunity for this role at Ingalls Memorial, and he really helped from the beginning; made the connection, gave me the opportunity to interview with them. And then, yeah, I was able to work under him with with shared services as well and being part of of his bigger information security team at UChicago. So that was great.

Ed Gaudet: And now working with Karen, who I've known forever and she's phenomenal as well. So you're two for two.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: I know, right? Like, you know, I'm very fortunate. Like she, honestly, she's the reason I'm back because as you can see, you know, last year, I left the organization for a short period of time, went to explore, you know, other areas, different industry. And, you know, I had this opportunity and I couldn't say no to working under her again.

Ed Gaudet: What was that like, leaving healthcare and then coming back with? Any takeaways from that experience? I know it was brief, but.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: Yeah, it was. Honestly, I think for me it was really good learning experience to see, you know, how other industries are doing security and privacy different from healthcare. It was brief, so I didn't have as much time to get into many details, but I was leading the third-party risk management program there, kind of like taking it also like a step further and making it more mature. So it was a really good experience to see how others do what we do in healthcare. Yeah, I couldn't say no to coming back to this great organization that I consider home.

Ed Gaudet: So yeah. Yeah. That's terrific. And you know, it's interesting to see the role of information security in GRC now converge. And so how is your background? How has your experience kind of set you up for success now in this new role?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: So I think it gave me this broad background, right, to be exposed to different things. So that now from a GRC perspective, right, we kind of like are telling to make it simple, right? We go and tell people what they can, they cannot do. Right?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz (cont'd): So having that background from, you know, the technical aspect, it gives me a better understanding of like, Okay, we need to do this, but this is how we can accomplish; not just try to impose, but kind of like understand why things are important and try to relate that to our users.

Ed Gaudet: And you're spending more time with the business I assume.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: That's correct. That's that's correct. So now I'm like away from like more technical. So now we can focus more on like, okay, the bigger mission. Right? And the vision. How can we make it happen? How can we help the business conduct, you know, their initiatives in the proper and secure way?

Ed Gaudet: And are you spending time with clinicians as well as G&A, general administrative functions?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: I am not personally spending as much with clinicians. We do from a third-party risk management, especially when, you know, they want to bring new vendors to help them with their functions. So that's where we step in and try to understand what it is that they're trying to do. At the same time, we work with supply chain. So it's a collaborative effort to say, Okay, you're trying to do this, but maybe we have another vendor that you can leverage so we don't have to go through this process. So that's to the extent right now that we are participating with the different chains.

Ed Gaudet: And where are you in your AI journey? Are you beginning to leverage governance? Have you put together a governance team?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: So we, I'm like, on that one, I'm not going to go too deep into. This is the earliest stages. But yes, we do have an AI governance committee, which is led by, current Karen Habercoss, our chief information security and privacy officer. So, you know, it's the earliest stages. But I know like they're setting the ground level for everyone to follow.

Ed Gaudet: Exciting times.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: It is very exciting. I mean, AI is everything these days, right? Like, we cannot prevent it. So we need to get on board and see how we can, you know, use it, embrace it, but do it the right way.

Ed Gaudet: Absolutely. So obviously, AI is probably a top priority. What are some of your other strategic initiatives over the next 12 months?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: Absolutely. So if I'm thinking about, you know, GRC, some of the things we do, I could name, like the two top that I have right now; would be third-party risk management, one, and the other one would be security awareness training. And you know, if I just look at it more like external threat versus insider threat, right? So third parties, it's really important to have like an active inventory of vendors that are providing services to us that access our data, our systems, right, so that we can identify, we can assess, you know, we can mitigate whatever risks they pose to us, not only from an onboarding perspective, which is what we would want to work with supply chain, right? Like make sure that we are checking all the boxes in the list, but also from a monitoring perspective, right? If we have a vendor providing services for five years, how do we make sure that they're meeting the security requirements, you know, and also the privacy requirements throughout the duration of the services, right? And then from a security awareness program, that would be the the insider threat, right? We oftentimes focus so much on the external threat because we think that's the higher risk. But at the end of the day, many of the incidents, cybersecurity incidents, is start with, you know, a compromised user on the inside. Right? So I think teaching our users to, you know, identify what could be suspicious, you know, help them, you know, take those steps and not be afraid to report it, I think that's something very, very important, which is why we're going to be focusing on that. Not just like the bad behaviors like, Oh, you know, you clicked on this email or this, but also, you know, promoting the culture that, Hey, come to us, we're here to help you. If you see something suspicious, report it. Don't be afraid. We're here to help you. So those are like the top initiatives that I want to focus on in the next year, I would say.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, that's interesting. And I loved your point about taking much more of a life-cycle approach to third-party risk based on the relationship over time and the changes that could happen because you could have changes to the application, but you could also have scoping changes like.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: Exactly. So how do you identify those, right? Because when you did the initial like the dev supply chains or the business comes to you and say, Hey, I want to do this service. Can we, you know, we do the risk assessment contracting everything. Right? Or we're using a narrow scope. What if that changes over time? Who is going to be that person that tells you in two years from now, we still have this active vendor, but now we've incorporated AI, for example, right, talking about that. We've incorporated other things. How can we make sure that, you know, what we're doing takes that into account; make sure that we continue to be secure with the new additions in the scope?

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. And maybe based on scope, they were low or medium risk initially, but based on usage, now they've risen to a critical function.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: Exactly.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, that's really interesting. I think that's where a lot of people are taking their third-party programs over the next couple of years. If you could go back in time, what would you tell your 20-year-old self?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: Okay, so I don't have to go back in time too much longer. You know, it hasn't been that long that I've been there. But, you know, going back, I would say, just don't be afraid. You know, like when you think you cannot do something, 100% you can. Maybe harder than what you thought, but I think we all can just push ourselves, get out of the comfort zone, and then just do it. And maybe you're not successful at the beginning, right? But we will learn from that. You fall, you get right back up, and then you keep trying until you get it. So I would say, just don't be afraid.

Ed Gaudet: Fast fail, I love that. You know, as you think about your day job and then when you're not working and maybe some, you have some hobbies or things that you love to do, what are you most passionate about? If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: So if I weren't doing this, of course, spending time with the family. And that's something I'm sure we all would love to do that. My family lives far from from here. They're all in Spain, so whenever I have the chance, taking that opportunity to spend time with them is my top priority. That's for sure. But, you know, I'm an athlete myself; I've been my entire career. I started playing tennis when I was very little back in Spain. And then is what brought me to the United States. You know, I was able to get a scholarship to play Division One college tennis and then my degree at the same time. So probably, I would be playing tennis and then probably doing triathlons with my husband. That's our little hobby that we both share. So they'd be the three things.

Ed Gaudet: Wow. And when did you start playing tennis? How old were you?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: I think I was three years old. Well, I actually have pictures with my great grandmother when I was like one year old, and just, I was just like two in a racket, basically. So, yeah, my parents played tennis, my sister played tennis. So I kind of like grew up. He was like, I had to. And then I loved it. I fell in love with it. And I played my entire life and I still play to this day, so.

Ed Gaudet: And do you watch too? Are you watching the Open?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: Yeah, I watch. I actually, this year, my husband and I made a trip to Australia and then we went to the Australian Tennis Open.

Ed Gaudet: Nice. Who are some of your favorites? Who still inspires you?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: They're retired. Okay. But obviously the easy one is like Rafa Nadal from Espana.

Ed Gaudet: Okay. I wasn't sure if you were a fan or not.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: Oh, yeah. I think he was a great competitor. Great ... off the court.

Ed Gaudet: He's the best. Yeah.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: Yeah. And same thing with Roger Federer. I would say those two. Fantastic. On and off the court. Like so the kids watching them, they can get inspired and then try to follow their steps.

Ed Gaudet: And have you taken any, I mean, tennis is a really interesting sport. Have you applied any of your learnings from tennis to cybersecurity or GRC?

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: I think so because, you know, in tennis you often, you lose more than you than you win. Right? So it teaches you that lesson that no matter how good you are, there's always going to be someone better and you're going to fail more times than you succeed. So that taught me from the beginning, like, it's okay, you know, to not be successful at the beginning. You just have, it teaches you, that you just have to keep trying. You have to keep being consistent, repeating things over time until you get them right. So for sure, it's something I learned from when I was little. And then I still use that advice. It's just, it taught me so much. And then playing in college, what you think tennis is an individual sport? And tennis is really a team sport, right? You win, you may win or you may lose, but you do it as a team. So I oh, I love that saying. And correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it's like, If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to make it far right, go with the team.

Ed Gaudet: That's right.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: So I think that's, I apply that to the day to day. Right? Like you can be really great contributor to the team? But at the end of the day, if you don't work together with the team, you're not going to make it that far.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz (cont'd): So it's super important to collaborate not just within our, you know, internal teams, but like with the bigger audience and make sure that we all build those relationships.

Ed Gaudet: I see a Forbes article in your future comparing your tennis learnings to how you apply those to cybersecurity. I love a lot of those aspects.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: I have a lot to say probably.

Ed Gaudet: Well, it was also, it's a very mathematical game too. And you know, which obviously, cyber, there's a lot to do with math and cyber.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: And mental. How to be resilient.

Ed Gaudet: Resilience is so. Yes, exactly. That is so critical because, you know, as you said, it's not a matter of if it's a matter of when. And we will fail. And so it's important that we know how to recover so we can continue to play. I love that.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: That one thing, for sure. We know we're going to fail. But how you recover and get up from that, it's really the important part.

Ed Gaudet: Exactly. I have to ask you this question. This is the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast. What is the riskiest thing you've ever done?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: I think may sound odd, but for me, the riskiest thing was like deciding to move overseas. You know? Being born and raised in Spain and decided to leave the family, the country you grew up in and come to a completely new country. I had never been here before. So I would say, when you're 18, that's a risky decision. Because you don't know, at 18, right, it's very hard to know. You know, we barely know our people one foot in front of the other, let alone make a big decision. So I think definitely that would be the riskiest thing. Now, looking back in time, it was the right decision. It's been great, a fantastic journey.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz (cont'd): But at that time, just for me and the family, we were not sure if that was the right thing to do.

Ed Gaudet: And where in Spain are you from? Whereabouts?

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: I'm from madrid.

Ed Gaudet: Madrid? Oh, I've been to Madrid. I love Madrid. Yeah, yeah.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: Usually people tell me I've been to Barcelona.

Ed Gaudet: I've been to Barcelona too. But no, my first trip to Spain actually was Madrid.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: Nice. How do you like it?

Ed Gaudet: I did, I liked it. I love Europe. It's so different than the US. There's so much, I don't know. I just, I love Paris. I love, I love Spain, I wish I could have walked, you know, that the pilgrimage there.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: Oh, I've done it.

Ed Gaudet: You have! Which route? The shorter one or the longer one?

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: So you can make it as long or as short as you want, right? Like you kind of start from different areas. My dad and I started in a city called Leon. So a little south, and then we did a mountain biking. And then yeah, we took us like five days. We did over like 800km, I believe it was something like that.

Ed Gaudet: Oh wow. Oh my gosh.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: So yeah. 2013 I believe it was.

Ed Gaudet: What was your favorite, do you remember any of the areas you stopped? Some of the?

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: If you ask me for names, I don't remember. My dad remembers absolutely every single day, everything. And I'm like.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, that's cool.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: All I can say was a fantastic experience because it he was my dad and I biking. And then, we had my mom and my grandma following us with the car from like, so that we could, you know, like if we needed help with the bikes or something, they were.

Ed Gaudet: Oh yeah, that's the way to do it actually.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: I know. Because usually that raw you carry your backpack, right? And it's heavy. We were like light on weight. So because we had help. But it was fantastic experience. If you ever had the chance I think whether you do walking or biking by horse, you can do it as well.

Ed Gaudet: Oh no. I like the car. I could do the car. Maybe follow somebody.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: Yeah, that's what my grandma, my grandma came back and said, I'm not doing this again.

Ed Gaudet: And she was in the car.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: I know, I know, probably because of that; it was too much waiting around for us. It was a good experience. We really loved it.

Ed Gaudet: All right, couple more questions. Are you a music fan or a movie fan or both?

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: Both I guess. A little bit of everything.

Ed Gaudet: All right. You're on a desert island, and you can take five records with you. What would they be?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: So there's going to be a mix. I don't know if I have five, but I can tell you my two big, three favorites. But they're in Spanish though. But I can tell you what they're about.

Ed Gaudet: Okay.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: One is called Todo Cambia, which is basically everything changes, and it goes kind of like from the perspective of someone who has left their country. And when they look back, kind of like their whole journey and how depending on, you know, like your 20s or your 30s or how you see things and how the human evolves through all those changes and the things that happen to you. So that's one of my favorites that I always try to listen to when I have, like, you know, a bad day. I always put it on kind of like to help me like, hey, this is a long journey. There's good days and bad days.

Ed Gaudet: Sounds like it could be a movie, too.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: Yeah, I'm sure they could make a movie. I'm sure they're going to make a movie. So that's one. The other one is I Will Survive.

Ed Gaudet: Gloria Gaynor.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: Yeah, for sure.

Ed Gaudet: Because you know, like I said, we, I think we can survive everything even if we think we can't. So those are the main two I would say.

Ed Gaudet: Okay. All right. Good. How about movies?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: So movies, I don't know if you know, you probably know is The Legends of The Fall.

Ed Gaudet: Legends of The Fall with Brad Pitt?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: Brad Pitt. Yeah.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. Of course.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: That's one of my favorites.

Ed Gaudet: That's a great movie.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: I love it. And every time I see it, I continue crying. Like, you know, every single time.

Ed Gaudet: Pretty powerful movie. Yeah.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: It is very powerful. You know, like the values of the family and how they endure everything that happens. Yeah. I think it is a fantastic movie.

Ed Gaudet: Do you watch Yellowstone or the 1823?

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: Not yet.

Ed Gaudet: Oh okay.

Ainhua Iglesias-Diaz: It's on my list.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. Good, good, good. Excellent. And then last question: what advice would you have for someone graduating that wants to get into healthcare and or cybersecurity or both?

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: So what I'd say: be open minded. And what I mean by that, right? Sometimes we think that we want one path or we really know what we want to do in life, but oftentimes, we're surprised that, hey, there's this other door here that if you open it could have like, many more opportunities than just trying to go a narrow path. Speaking for myself, I did electrical engineering, and look where I am right now, right? So basically, where you start has nothing to do with your path can lead you to. So being open minded I think is very important to note ...

Ed Gaudet: That is great advice. I don't think, you know, I think that should be like at the, when they're handing out the diploma, they should give them also that advice, like.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: Yeah. I mean for me, I think it would have been very helpful. Luckily, I had my parents always reminding like, Hey, do not close any doors. Never know what could happen. So I think that's the advice I would give to anyone graduating.

Ed Gaudet: Excellent, excellent. That's a great way to end. Ainhoa, thank you so much for your time. Pleasure to have you on the program today.

Ainhoa Iglesias-Diaz: Thank you very much for having me.

Ed Gaudet: All right. And this is Ed Gaudet from the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast. And if you're on the front lines protecting patient safety and care delivery, remember to stay vigilant, because Risk Never Sleeps.



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