



Podcast Transcript

Risk Never Sleeps

Episode 96

Cari Daniels

Ed Gaudet: Welcome to the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast, in which we talk to the folks that are on the front lines protecting patient safety and delivering patient care. I'm Ed Gaudet, the host of our program, and today I am pleased to be joined by Cari Daniels, the Senior Information Security Analyst at UNC Healthcare. Welcome, Cari.

Cari Daniels: Thank you so much for having me.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, good to see you. And let's start off with learning a little more about your role and your organization.

Cari Daniels: Absolutely. UNC Health Care, it's pretty big health care system here in North Carolina, I think there are about 11 hospitals, 13 or so campuses, and I have lose track how many clinics; I think we're close to a thousand or more clinics. So we're pretty big health care system. I came into UNC, I was a network engineer at a rural hospital here in the state, and they went under a managed services agreement, which is how I came to be an analyst with UNC.

Ed Gaudet: All right. And what's your typical day look like as a information security analyst?



Cari Daniels: So our information security analyst role is broad. We all have teams within our team. You've got your technical security folks in our entity and even our entity's broken into smaller teams. The team that I am on, we focus primarily on policies, standards, risk assessments, contracts. We work very closely with our privacy office. Our lives tend to blur sometimes, and that's our primary focus. So we do a lot of work also with our partners at the university.

Ed Gaudet: Excellent. And how did you get into healthcare IT?

Cari Daniels: Honestly, it's not a very exciting story. Again, I live in a small rural town in North Carolina, and I took a network engineer position at our local hospital. It's very hard to find good IT jobs where I'm at. Most, everybody's in Raleigh, about an hour east of Raleigh, And I got lucky. I interviewed and they wanted me. Thank you. And I've been with UNC since 15 years.

Ed Gaudet: Excellent. And now we're in the, you were in the Navy, I see. Thank you for your service. Did you do IT in the Navy as well?

Cari Daniels: I did when I first joined up. We were called radioman and then they split that field. Some people went into satellite communications and some of us went over to IT, and I had a knack for it. I liked it. Did a lot of work with NATO and joint forces, so my career was not a typical Navy career. Senior chiefs and such might get upset that I've never been on a boat, but I had a lot of good experience and it just propelled me to where I am today.

Ed Gaudet: Excellent. And when you think about policy and governance, you mentioned those two things, how do you think about artificial intelligence? It seems to be the topic of the day. What are you doing, what are your teams doing in that area, if anything?

Cari Daniels: UNC is doing quite a bit, and I want to be careful on how much I divulge. But our enterprise analytics data science team, they run with it, they've developed the framework and they're doing a fantastic job. The security office we consult, and I know our CISO sits on a lot of the governance committees for that. I'm not quite as involved with the AI yet, but we regulate that very closely. Like I said, we, our team, our analytics team has really moved.



Cari Daniels (cont'd): They've just, they're impressive with the ... they've done, the frameworks they've established, the work that they're doing. And they move so fast; lightning speed. They're so great with it. And we're just doing everything we can to stay on that cutting edge of technology, but securely.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. It's crazy how fast AI in particular is moving.

Cari Daniels: Very fast. And security analyst, we like to flow. So it's been fun and interesting, but we have such a strong team, it's impressive.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. Very good. As you look at your team and your overall strategy and program, what are your top three priorities or strategic initiatives over the next couple of years?

Cari Daniels: Well, I think for my area, just to speak in my small space, we just finished our SOC two type one, which was a big deal. We are actively working towards the type two now. It's definitely a top priority. We're switching a lot over from an ISO-based framework to a NIST-based framework, and trying to align ourselves more with the federal standards we try to predict the future. Looks like there could be some change coming our way at the federal level, looking at the executive orders that kind of keep coming out. For my area within our security office, that's my direct focus. I think, as a whole, research for a teaching hospital, so research is a big initiative; AI has been a big initiative; and just establishing that cohesiveness between like us and university; and just being a well-oiled machine. But my space is a lot smaller. I look at a very small section of all of our efforts.

Ed Gaudet: Okay, good. And then anything you can share with listeners in terms of your decision, you said you went from NIST, or from ISO to NIST. Any insight into why you did that or what your learnings were or?

Cari Daniels: I think I'm a little more biased towards NIST just because my graduate school experience, that was all based federal privacy law and things like that, and it's all in this NIST-based.



Cari Daniels (cont'd): If you look at our executive orders, like the federal networks, the Critical Infrastructure Act, that's a partnership with federal government, right? Health care is critical infrastructure. Federal government: what do they use? They use NIST, FedRAMP. It, to me, it just makes sense. If they start making changes to the security law, they start to make statutes to force a critical, infrastructure-specific rare healthcare facility change into the cybersecurity rules. If I had to predict about a crystal ball, I would say they're going to say NIST as their framework. That's their area of expertise. They've developed it. And I just think it's easier. It's just an easier framework to get on board with even doing our SoC work. Everything we're doing, NIST aligned very well with the requirements we needed for our SOC attestation, and I just think it's the way to go. My opinion.

Ed Gaudet: That's good. That's good insight. That harmonization in that alignment with the regulations is a really good way to think about it, especially in light of you said the recent administrative announcements regarding the cybersecurity performance goals, the CPGs, the reporting, the opening up most likely of HIPAA, and the security rule, which may or may not zoom those CPGs over time. Right? Or they may stand on their own. No, that's a really good way to think about it. What keeps you up at night? I'm sure a lot.

Cari Daniels: Oh Lord! AI is one that keeps me up at night, for sure. The unknowns to me. Obviously, I don't work on the technical side of security anymore. Remove myself and have moved more into the regulatory side. So I feel like I'm always playing catch up sometimes with new technology. So that is just a personal thing that I know I need to be better with. In all, the other thing that keeps me up at night is vendors and integrations. I like to share. I wish we could stay in our bubble, but that's just not feasible in healthcare anymore. Those are my fears. I think we have a very strong security program. We have leaders who invest in our security program and can back us 110%. And I know there's a lot of security professionals that can't always say that. I'm thankful for that. That helps me sleep. But always, there's always going to be an area of risk. It's the unknown. It's, the saying is: It's not a matter of if. It's when all of those things are in your head. Are you doing everything? I can't just set your security posture for a day and leave it. It's something you need to monitor and change all the time.



Ed Gaudet: I wonder what we could do that, we could actually set it. And it may change twice every year at the most.

Cari Daniels: ... I think you have to monitor all that threat intelligence and make adjustments almost daily. Even though I'm not a management position, I'm not executive. I take a lot of pride in our organization, and so I never want to see us on the front page. I want to do what I can to keep us from being a front page. So that would keep me up at night. And there's always room for improvement. So I'm not going to speak specifically to ... improvement or, but there's always areas that will keep you up.

Ed Gaudet: Excellent. Outside of your current day job, outside of healthcare and IT and cyber, what are you most passionate about? What would you be doing if you weren't doing this job? Any hobbies or?

Cari Daniels: I love fitness. I think if I wasn't doing this job, I'd be a gym junkie and I follow my kids around everywhere; traveling, sport parents. So there's that. But I think even if I had the freedom to not work, I'd still probably be doing some sort of cyber security or data privacy, at least part-time, because I do love it. I'm passionate about it. Specifically, I'm passionate about Fourth Amendment protections and technology, which is outside the realm of healthcare. If I had the time, I would probably join maybe some interest groups or do some volunteer work on something with that, but that would probably be it. Pretty boring. After serving in the military, I'm okay sitting at home reading a book.

Ed Gaudet: I subscribe to that. I know. I was in the, I was in the Field Artillery for eight years..

Cari Daniels: Has gone all those years. I'm ready to just be home.

Ed Gaudet: Never a dull moment. Which is a nice segue into the riskiest thing you've ever done. Basic training, right?



Cari Daniels: I think I was too young and naive to realize that, but and I'm a very shy, introverted person, believe it or not. I actually didn't mind it. The riskiest thing. I've really struggled to come up with an example because again, my friends had nicknamed me the Safety Police. I am the one that keeps us within all confines of the law. We do everything the right way. Rules are meant to be followed.

Ed Gaudet: Every friend group needs a safety police.

Cari Daniels: I am the safety police, I would say. I have had a lot of knee surgeries and I still do stupid things. I still like Tough Mudders or Spartans or trying to play soccer with my kids when I'm old and broken. But as far as something like interesting, that's risky, I can't think of it. I'm pretty boring.

Ed Gaudet: I wouldn't say that, but that's good. Again, your Navy career aside is, I'm sure there were a lot of things that were quote-unquote risky through that experience.

Cari Daniels: Yeah, that whole war thing that was fun. But even then, you don't realize, when you're young, you just go and you don't think about it. So my parents were ready to kill me. That was probably risky. I joined when my parents were out of town and told them when they came home, my mom.

Ed Gaudet: You are a risk taker. Look at that.

Cari Daniels: But my mom didn't kill me, and that was probably my biggest risk because she was pretty angry. But no, I'll be honest, I wanted to go to school and not have student debt; that was the driving force for me, but it ended up probably being one of the best decisions I've ever made. I had a great time in. Great friends. No regrets. I regret maybe how I did it; behind my parents' back was probably not the greatest way to do that. But.

Ed Gaudet: It's a great experience, isn't it? Because I fought it, I didn't want to go, I had to go for a couple of reasons. But it was the best decision.



Ed Gaudet (cont'd): And quite frankly, I probably wouldn't be here right now if I hadn't gone through it.

Cari Daniels: Exactly. And I'm very cautious. But once I make a decision, I've made it and I run with it, and that's what I did.

Ed Gaudet: Excellent. We're on a desert island together, and you've got five albums that you brought with you or movies. What would they be?

Cari Daniels: I would bring books. I love to read.

Ed Gaudet: All right then. Now you have to share what are you reading with our listeners and with me because I'm a voracious reader. I usually have five books going at once. What are you reading?

Cari Daniels: I read mind-numbing fiction, something I don't have to think about that I can get lost in. So after a stressful day, if I watch TV or whatnot, my brain is still turning and I'm still nervous or trying to do something different. When I get a good fiction book that can take me into the story, I relax, I sleep better; that's my escape. It's boring as that sounds. It's either exercise or it's books. There's, if I'm watching TV, it's nothing I would want to tell the world what I'm watching, because it's going to be something mind-numbing and not educational.

Ed Gaudet: The Love Island program or Bachelorette or. I watched those.

Cari Daniels: Not quite that far, but close. Very close to that.

Ed Gaudet: I'm a big fan of Love Island. I have three daughters and they got me hooked on this Love Island show. So that's.

Cari Daniels: When you're writing documents all day, you don't want anything that requires a lot of brain power. You're ready to just go into an alternate universe.



Cari Daniels (cont'd): But reading, I would choose a book. I don't do movies because I'm always moving. I've got a pen in my hand because I'm always moving. It's not easy for me to sit still. But if you give me a book, I can sit there for hours.

Ed Gaudet: But the movie experience too, has changed. I went to a movie last night, as it turned out, with my, with one of my daughters, and it's a new movie called Longlegs, and it's a horror thriller. And oh yeah, so it was very, I was very anxious within five minutes of watching this movie and then for the next two hours, and I was also worried about my safety in the theater, believe it or not, which is a, it's a weird, yeah, it's a weird feeling. And everybody that was coming and going, I was like, noticing while the movie was happening, which I've never really experienced before. So that was an interesting experience.

Cari Daniels: I think I'm like that anywhere I go now; always looking, watching, paying attention to my surroundings.

Ed Gaudet: I'm more vigilant, a lot more vigilant than were like 20 years ago, I think.

Cari Daniels: At talks with my friend, don't walk to your car on your phone. Make sure you're looking up and not let people see you as not paying attention. And I doubt he's listening to me. I'm sure he's texting all the time. He's looking for that car. But when you try to tell everyone the importance of that and I. It's different world than when we were kids.

Ed Gaudet: Okay, so now you can go back in time and see your 20-year-old self. What would you tell your 20-year-old self?

Cari Daniels: That you don't know anything? You think you know everything, but you don't. I joined the military with the intention of being a forensic psychologist, wanting to work for the FBI, and I ended up in IT, and turn 40 and I go back to grad school for a legal degree. Totally different.

Ed Gaudet: That's a risk right there. You just, look at you risk taker!



Cari Daniels: That was something I've always promised myself I would do. I might join the military for free college and I made promises to myself I would do it. So I kept my promise. It took me forever and a day. But I kept my promise. I've got an 18-year-old son about to go off to college, and there's all this pressure to know who and what to want to be. But you're going to change your mind so many times, and that's okay. Amen. You may make three career choices, and I think nowadays, switching jobs is some of the only ways to climb the ladder, if that's your intention and that's okay too. And to just be patient and make your choices based on happiness, like happiness, drive those career choices. Because if you don't love what you do, you're just going to be not be passionate. You have to be passionate about what you do. One thing with UNC, when they gave me the app, I couldn't find a cybersecurity job where I live lived. Again, I live out in the country. And when we became under their umbrella and they absorbed all of us IT folks, and I said, My undergrad is in cybersecurity. And I said, Do you have position? And they gave me a chance, and I will forever appreciate that. The chance that they gave me was to ... One of the main reasons I went back to graduate school, they showed me a whole another side of the security platform with governance, risk, compliance that I just, I think I liked it so much because I didn't know it. I'd sit in meetings. I don't know what anybody's talking about. I need to figure this out. And that was a big motivator. I'll be forever grateful that they gave me that opportunity. They took the bet on me. And it reignited that passion. I was getting burnt out and bored with the technical stuff; at 2 a.m. calls if something broke. This new position has challenged me. I'm green. I'm new at it, figuring it out as I go. I've never written policies before. I'm going to like it. I like getting to know everybody, even the SOC audits. You think you know everything about what you're doing, and then you get into these audits and these third-party attestations and finds eye-opening like, Oh, look, that's something we can fix and change it this way. Or it's just reignited the excitement for what I do.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. It really gives you, it gives you this unique visibility into the business and the connection and impact of technology that you wouldn't otherwise get. Yeah, no, that's a really good point. And I love your discussion about the conversations you're having with your son. And as you think about as the last question, as you think about giving advice to other folks that are either going into college or coming out of school looking for a cyber job, what advice would you give them?



Cari Daniels: Internships. You can't get a cyber job without experience. Maybe you can, but I have a friend of mine whose son just recently graduated up about a year ago, and it's been a struggle he doesn't have that experience. Take the internships, and take as many as you can, and get all that as much experience as you could put down on paper to help get your foot in the door somewhere. Because I think experience is invaluable, and I think that experience will give you an edge over other graduates from your class vying for the same position. Yeah, there's a shortage for cybersecurity professionals. So everybody's been pretty outspoken about that. At the same time, I have found it hard for younger new grads to find positions and I know they're needed. Internships: one thing to learn things in the classroom; it's another to go and do that. Even if the internship is fixing computers, it's experience. And when you're working in security, it's not, even an entry-level cybersecurity job, in my opinion, is not entry-level. You're expected to know how servers work, how networks work, how the workstation works, how you can tie all that together, how the data is transversing your network. Take the internships and networking and use your support server administration. It does not have to say security in the title for it to benefit you and learning how this technology works.

Ed Gaudet: I love that. I love that. It's great, solid, foundational advice to begin a career. So Cari, thank you so much for joining us today. I really appreciate your time.

Cari Daniels: Thank you.

Ed Gaudet: Good to meet you. This is Ed Gaudet from the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast. If you're on the front lines protecting patient safety and delivering patient care, remember to stay vigilant because Risk Never Sleeps.



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