

Get to know NEMSQA's new Project Manager for the Lights and Siren Collaborative!

Jason Gilliam, LP, FP-C, comes to NEMSQA with over 23 years of EMS experience. Currently living in Portugal, Jason enjoys traveling and eating chestnuts (since his preferred hazelnuts aren't available!)

Jason shared his love for EMS, saying, "It's like the old adage: If you enjoy what you do, you never work a day in your life. And I feel very blessed."



What first brought you into EMS?

In college, I was pre-med and I was planning to become a physician. However, I was diagnosed with cancer and given about a year to live. I didn't think that I would make it that far given my prognosis but I really wanted to become a physician so I could treat people. There was a guy in my organic chemistry class that had been a paramedic, and he told me stories about being a medic. And I thought, "Hey, I could do that! How long does that take?" So I went and got my medic, and kinda took off. Obviously everything worked out for me health-wise. But I never went back to school because I became a paramedic and life followed that direction. I've enjoyed every aspect of my career.

What's one thing you're especially proud of doing in your professional career?

The thing I'm probably most proud of is being able to get a whole blood program on the ground in Austin. I think whole blood really needs to be provided to people by ground EMS, not by helicopters. Especially in rural EMS – if you're going to survive large traumas, you need to have blood available and you can't do that if you don't carry it.

How did you get involved in quality improvement?

When I started, things were all compliance-based, and they were all benchmarked against some standard that had been created [without] any sort of evidence. In my frustration of trying to make a department better, I delved into ideas of what improvement really is, and I went back to school for that. I learned how to create measures and how to impact people to make those measures change, and how to recognize when they change.

It's a program where you are always looking to do better. That improvement is not about a destination, and it's not about a number – it's about a constant strive to make it better than it was previously. That comes through iterative change that is constantly observed. Otherwise you're going to always try things and you'll only be right by chance.

What would your dream job be?

I would love to be able to play with all of the data that's out there. I think that would be really cool. I would love to be able to do a deep dive into a dataset which is so big and so vast, and try to look at all of the correlations, and find out what the multicollinearity is and eliminate that, and find out what really matters. I think that would be fun!