



FOCUS ON: Rony Arafin,
Director of Health Insights - British Heart Foundation;
CEO - Association of Professional Healthcare Analysts.

What do you enjoy most about being the Director of Analytics, and what aspect do you find the most difficult?

I really enjoy having the opportunity to speak to various people in our profession, particularly the jobbing analysts (of course, I was one!). It's fascinating to really get into what we need to achieve as a professional body to support the grassroots workforce.

And difficulties — that's a tricky question 😊. I'd say my bugbear is hearing "so you have a lot of experience with Dashboards!" when I meet with external stakeholders. Don't get me started — we can do so much more than dashboards...! You can probably imagine the burst of energy I get when I start explaining this to other people. My immediate response is always "how long have you got!"

What do you think are the biggest challenges analysts face right now, and what are the biggest opportunities?

The advancement of technologies like AI can get us distracted, looking at shiny new things instead of getting the basics right. We need to remember, for example, how important quality of data is for discovering actionable insight.

We have so much data in health and there's so much fantastic work happening across our profession. But we need to do more to make sure other people benefit from it. We need to try and make our work reproducible for wider adoption. We should ask ourselves how we can combine our strengths to deliver insight that can be used to transform healthcare. Now is the time!

If there was one thing that would make getting into analytics careers easier, what would it be?

Knowing how to find your purpose as an analytics professional is key. As is having various ways of getting into roles themselves. We need more than the traditional way of completing a university degree to make sure more people have the opportunity. That means apprenticeships and applied routes into analytics, as well as academic paths.

What are your key aims for the AphA/CAON over the next few years?

My key aims are to support analytics professionals in every way that we can. We need to raise awareness of our work amongst senior leaders and establish our profile alongside Digital and CIO/CDOs. We want to have visible Data and Analytics leadership in trusts and systems, as well as at a national level. Expanding our work via the Chief Analytical Officers Network (CAON) will help strengthen and embed this role.

We also want to do more to truly champion equality, diversity and inclusion across the profession: promoting women in data and supporting opportunities for people from all walks of life to get into Data and Analytics.