



Belonging to a Nursing Association

BY GENEVIÈVE M. CLAVREUL, RN, PHD

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, I have had the enjoyable opportunity to participate in two nursing associations, California Association of Nurse Practitioners (CANP; www.canpweb.org) and the American Society for Pain Management Nursing (ASPMN; www.aspmn.org).

I've enjoyed attending both groups' meetings as the nurses are not only

professional, but the environment is collegial, and members are encouraged to network with the presenters and among themselves. The meetings for both groups are held at restaurants, and the cost of the dinner and meeting appears to be underwritten by grants from various companies, leaving the member to pay only a small fee ranging from \$10 to \$25.

An association allows you to spend quality time with colleagues, keep updated on the latest in nursing, and earn CEU credits to boot!

Many associations offer CEUs to those who attend their meetings. In California, this is an added bonus, since we all need to have 30 hours of post-licensure education in order to renew our license every two years, and many nurses find themselves scrambling to accumulate the necessary CEUs to qualify come renewal time.

Often included in the membership fee is a newsletter, magazine, or journal subscription. Many of these journals are considered preeminent in their field and publish interesting, noteworthy studies. These journals also offer a venue for nurses who are involved in research to have their works peer-reviewed and published.

Belonging to an association allows nurses to spend several hours of quality time with their colleagues in a pleasant restaurant, be kept updated on the latest in nursing, and get CEUs to boot!

At the meetings I have attended, the presenters have been physicians, nurses, or specialists in their fields. At one of the ASPMN meetings, the presenter happened to be a nurse whose specialty was pain management. One would think that 30-plus years in nursing would teach me a lot about this topic. Not so! So much is being done in this area, and it appears as though nurses and nurse practitioners are very much in the forefront of pain management work. GO NURSES!

There are associations for all aspects of nursing. The focus may be on specialty, such as: Academy of Medical Surgical Nurses, American Association of Critical Care Nurses, Association of Nurse Executives, and National Association of Neonatal Nurses. There are nursing associations that focus not so much on specialty but on cultural or ethnicity or even gender, such as: the American Assembly for Men in Nursing, National Association of Hispanic Nurses, and National Black Nurses Association. There is an association for the student nurse and for the retired nurse, and so forth.

How do you go about learning which associations are out there to join? Here are some suggestions:

- 1). Ask your nursing administration office or Human Resources department.
- 2). Check with your nursing team members and colleagues on the floor to see if they belong to any associations.
- 3). Type "Nursing Associations" in Google, which should yield over 10 pages of results. The top few listings are websites that have already indexed many nursing associations, so they can provide a directory. Once you

find an association you're interested in, you may discover there is or is not an active chapter in your area. The group may not even meet monthly as some opt for quarterly meetings that lead up to an annual meeting. Investigate the association online or have information sent to you.

Most associations have a similar organizational structure, such as an overarching main body, which is divided into units referred to as regions, and in most cases, subdivided into even smaller units referred to as chapters. Membership fees can run from \$50-\$100 a year. Your hospital employer may pay some or all of the registration fee, so be sure to check with your superior to see if such a program exists in your hospital. You often don't need to be a member to participate in monthly meetings, though you may be expected to pay a higher meeting fee, which is fair. Some membership fees may be tax deductible. Be sure to check with your accountant or tax preparer before deciding to write it off.

Once a member of the association, it is important to actively network with the other association members, attend and participate in workshops and continuing education opportunities, and to hold positions of leadership if the opportunity presents itself.

It is often easy for us to say, "I'm so busy that I can't fit another hour in my day," or "Don't I spend enough time surrounded by nurses when I am at work?" However, I think you'll find the personal interaction experienced in the association setting is a different dynamic from the day-to-day environment at work.

Being involved in a nursing association has many benefits. It can provide an outlet or resource that is otherwise unavailable. It may give a career boost by allowing you to explore another field of nursing before making a move. It allows you to network, take on leadership roles, and make new friendships within your profession.

I strongly encourage my readers to test these waters; for those who already have their foot in the pool, try swimming slightly deeper. If you belong to a nursing association, I drop me a line and tell me about your experience. **WN**



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