

ASPAN Membership Has It's Privileges

During my first meeting with Region 3 Component Leaders at National Conference, Component Leaders asked, "How can we increase component membership?" I was not prepared to answer that question. Since National Conference I have researched reasons why individuals join a professional organization and can now share those reasons with you.

As any good research nurse would do, I fine tuned the topic with the identification of two main questions to consider, "What are component leaders really wanting to accomplish" and "Why do nurses join their professional organization?" A literature search on benefits of membership in professional organizations revealed several articles. The second step was to contact Jane Lind, ASPAN Membership Chair, and Rob Spina, ASPAN Director of Development and Marketing. Finally, as one of three interviewers of applicants for membership on an international volunteer nursing committee, I asked, "Why did you join your professional organization" or if they were not currently a member of their professional organization, I asked, "What do you feel that you would gain from joining your professional organization?"

An article by Frank (2005) suggested that to just join a professional organization was not enough. She suggested that to reap the full benefits of the organization, members must be engaged by finding a committee of interest and joining. Frank encourages organizational members to **invite a colleague to build a stronger voice for nursing**. Frank also pointed out membership gives nurses:

- Chance to be in control of their professional destiny.
- Educational and personal development opportunities.
- Networking Opportunities.
- Exchange of ideas.
- Feeling energized after attending meetings.
- Certification in the organization's nursing specialty.

A study by DeLeskey (2003) of ASPAN current and former members explored factors affecting the decision to join or maintain membership. Former members cited economics and lack of time as reasons for not renewing membership. Current members cited "Improvement in my work" as the only variable rated statistically significant.

Jane Lind and Rob Spina have just completed a survey of ASPAN members to determine the best practice of recruiting new members. These results will be shared over the next few months.

Finally in my own small study of nurses who were interviewing for positions on a volunteer international nursing committee, when asked the two questions above identified the following reasons to become a member of AORN:

- Job requirement.
- Standards for why we do what we do.
- Teaching people.
- Gets people excited when they go to conference.
- Political side of nursing, i.e. Regulations.
- Educational side of nursing.
- Get the Journal
- Increases curiosity about other areas of OR practice, such as SPD.

It is my hope that this article stimulates conversation about the many positive aspects of ASPAN membership. As Frank suggests, "Invite a colleague to build a stronger voice for nursing".

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References:

DeLeskey, K. (2003). Factors affecting nurses's decisions to join and maintain membership in professional associations. Journal of PeriAnesthesia Nursing. 18(1),8-17.

Frank, K. (2005). Benefits of professional nursing organization membership. AORN Journal. 82(1), 13-14.