Why Physicians Should Join a Professional Organization

Taking an active role in professional associations can benefit physicians through networking opportunities, policy alerts, and continuing education.

There are plenty of healthcare professional organizations, but are the yearly dues worth it to join? As budgets get squeezed, many physicians and practice managers have been cutting back on the number of professional associations they belong to. Although there is often a lack of perceived benefit, membership in professional associations yields a number of benefits.

1. **Education**
   Perhaps the most important benefit is education. (A plea here to physicians is to remember this applies to your practice managers. If you want a successful practice, run by a talented practice manager, you must be willing to support his or her professional continuing education.) Most associations provide an enormous amount of access to resource information such as: case studies, articles, white papers and books written by experts in your field or area of interest. Providers and managers can keep up with the newest developments (clinical and operational) through their association membership benefits, including conferences. Take advantage of all the information your associations provide and remember that most of it is online and free.

2. **Networking**
   Another important benefit is networking. There is no better way to connect with peers and industry experts than through professional association membership. There is often a variety of possible venues to network at (e.g. listservs, membership connections and groups, national conferences, regional seminars, etc.), providing you are willing to get engaged with other members. Networking with professionals outside your place of employment can give you a broader perspective on the market and healthcare in general.

3. **Industry standards**
   Webinars are frequent these days as a means to deliver information on hot topics such as best practices, new statistics, etc. No matter what your specialty is, staying on top of all of these issues is important.

4. **Policy updates**
   All of us in healthcare know how much one piece of legislation can impact our profession. Professional associations not only update members about these types of changes but also often play an advocacy role on behalf of the membership. I have been involved in this with professional associations and it can often be a tiring effort to work with legislators at the state and national level. However, associations involved in this are able to inform members how to prepare for any upcoming change.

5. **Jobs**
   Most people already know that they can often search for jobs on association job boards as members. Keep in mind that your practice may want to utilize these job boards to post positions for your practice. Recruiters will often post on the job boards as well, so if you are working with a recruiter, be sure to let them know about your preferred associations.

6. **Intrinsic value**
   In addition to money, associations need support to survive. Associations are always in need of new blood to help organize their annual meetings, workshops, CME courses, and legislative committees. This means taking an active role in leadership positions or committees can not only help the association, but also help you personally (from leadership development to networking, to potential job searches). As the saying goes, "You get out of it what you put into it." Undoubtedly the members who get the most out of an association are the ones who get involved and are more interactive.