

Membership in professional organizations is a way for professionals with similar objectives to join together to have the voice of many, versus the voice of one. Joining an organization can lead to personal growth, enhanced professional perspective and knowledge development, and support for creating change.

#### AT A GLANCE

- Membership in professional organizations affords numerous benefits, including certification opportunities, networking, professional publications, continuing education, and standards for practice.
- Exploring professional organizations outside a practice role and specialty may provide additional benefits, such as viewing the complexity of oncology care from an interprofessional perspective.
- Nurse membership in these organizations also can increase nursing participation and leadership on diverse initiatives that influence healthcare policy and practice.

#### KEYWORDS

professional memberships; interprofessional; professional development

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# Professional Organization Membership

The benefits of increasing nursing participation

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Professional organizations offer numerous benefits, including continuing education, professional publications, networking, and a platform for engagement in clinical, political, and regulatory activity (Halstead, 2018; Wilson, 2014). There are professional organizations that represent diverse nursing specialties, patient populations, and professional interests (Halstead, 2018). The American Nurses Association (2019) serves as the leading organization for 4 million RNs across all specialties and practice settings in the United States. About 10%–20% of nurses are members of the more than 300 nursing professional organizations in the United States alone (Black, 2017; Walton, 2017). The Oncology Nursing Society ([ONS], 2019) has more than 39,000 members representing the estimated 120,000 nurses engaged in oncology care across the United States (U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, 2010).

There are many organizations from which to choose, and time and cost have been reported as significant contributors to the decision of whether to join a professional organization (Walsh & Daddario, 2015). In this article, the authors will present three reasons why thinking outside the box when it comes to professional membership can support the growth of the individual and of the

presence of nurses as participants and leaders of organizations at the local and national levels.

#### Personal Growth

Professional memberships provide an opportunity for professional growth. These memberships often come with continuing education opportunities, discounted certification examination costs, reduced conference fees, and subscriptions to peer-reviewed publications (Halstead, 2018; Wilson, 2014). These all can contribute to the maintenance of licensure and to keeping up-to-date with the most current evidence to support practice. In addition, membership is the first step toward taking more active roles within organizations, which can lead to growth opportunities personally and professionally. Individuals should envision their professional futures when joining organizations and select those that can help with networking and moving toward those goals. For example, if staff nurses would like to pursue a career in leadership, the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (2019) may be a good choice, particularly if they plan to engage in their local chapters. This can provide insight into the current trends and topics of interest to nurse leaders and offer an opportunity for mentoring as they take the next steps toward a leadership role.