Editorial

The value of networking for professional nurses

Attending conferences, meetings, workshops or professional gatherings mostly revolves around improving skills, competencies and knowledge. Meeting, liaising and networking with colleagues and other professionals are aspects that are not usually taken into consideration when motivating to attend such professional events. The importance of networking in nursing is not recognised and promoted amongst nursing and health professionals

The value of networking is not only about knowing people, it is a valuable tool in building a strong professional support system for yourself. A network of professionals who will support, advise and encourage you can be an invaluable asset. Professional networking is the act of building relationships and connections in the workplace and professional gatherings. The benefits of a strong network of professionals include increased engagement in healthcare policies and standards, a better understanding of the changes and trends in the profession, improved opportunities for career advancement as well as providing an outlet for communication with other professionals. If you want to excel in your career and you want to ensure that you hear and know of all the professional developments and opportunities, you need to understand networking as an essential skill.

A strong network is not built in a day; you must make a concerted effort to create a strong professional network. The tools to establish a network include active participation in one or more professional society. These societies are organisations where nurses with similar interests are grouped together and this is very powerful in your network. Professional societies, national and international, provide support and opportunities for clinical specialists but also non-clinical areas of expertise.

Membership gives access to the latest research, developments and opportunities in your specific field of interest and expertise. Attending meetings and social events is vital in the establishment and expansion of your network, giving you exposure to the challenges in the industry as well as the understanding of the expertise available amongst members.

Attendance of conferences and workshops is not only a means to earn your CPD (Continuous Professional Development) credits; the availability of unlimited networking opportunities is not to be overlooked. You'll learn more about your industry, its future and its challenges. In the ever-changing nursing profession this means it can be a great opportunity to learn about the latest moves in your profession and stay abreast of major developments. Conferences and workshops are ideal to learn about new trends and best practices.

It is important to understand that a key element to effective networking is to make oneself known. Attending professional and other events must be planned and used to identify those professionals you want to meet, to seek opportunities to introduce and market yourself and to follow up soon after the event, the goal being that the more people you meet, the more people will get to know you and remember who you are. It is important to leave a positive impression with everyone you meet. One should use every professional and social opportunity to meet and connect with new people.

Networking can be a great source of fresh ideas, new perspectives, and ideas to help you in your career and professional development. Networking is a great way to identify business and nursing best practices or industry benchmarks. Learning from what others do is a valuable strategy for all businesses.

The Forum for Professional Nurse Leaders, Society of Private Nursing Practitioners, South African Urology Association and Nursing Education Association are only a few of the Professional Societies that hosted conferences in 2018. The Professional Nursing Today is a vehicle for professional societies to give feedback of events, publish articles focussing on best practices and the Nursing Societies are invited to become actively involved.

Annelie Meiring