Association Membership Is Vital to Your Professional Survival

By Gene G. Veno

Editor’s note: This is the third in a series of articles on the importance of state chiropractic association membership. *Part 1 appeared in the Feb. 12 issue; Part 2 appeared in the Feb. 26 issue.*

I have four principles to keep in mind as you forge ahead in your career as a doctor of chiropractic, particularly during these difficult economic times: (1) Your services are still important to those you serve. (2) Despite the financial losses you may be suffering, you have the skill set to grow your practice. (3) You are not alone. (4) The economy will survive. The question is, will you survive? One way to ensure your survival is to join your state chiropractic association. Strength in numbers is an old adage, but there is something to it. If more people invest in the profession, you will have a greater collective ability to deal with the economy and its effects.

Your association is only as good as its membership base. Maintaining your membership says you value your association and respect what it does for you. Your dues are merely a show of commitment, support and appreciation for many years of hard work on your behalf by your association, those who came before you and, most importantly, those who will one day take your place. In addition, helping to recruit new members says a great deal about your commitment to the ongoing success of your association, your profession and yourself.

Membership involves three important elements: Value: You are appreciated and valued by patients, vendors, etc., for your commitment. Security: You are well-represented in legislative and other matters. Respect: You demonstrate your respect for the many who have helped your profession become what it is today.

Why is association membership so important, particularly during this economic downturn? The financial crisis is not only affecting Wall Street and Main Street; it is also affecting associations and their financial operations. Your association needs money for a variety of reasons, but one of the most important is to fight on your behalf. I encourage you to keep your membership active and volunteer your services. Keep all of your association’s activities in the minds of regulators, legislators and administrators who oversee your business. Your state association is the beacon of light that shines on all of these important entities, making
sure your professional license, certification and standards of operation are not infringed upon by others trying to do what you do for less and with no experience.

The cost of belonging to your state membership organization is well-worth the benefits you receive in return. Just think of where your profession would be today without any professional associations or organizations representing you at all levels of government. Where would you turn if your scope of practice were threatened?

Many of the benefits of belonging to state associations are taken for granted by members and nonmembers alike. Association boards and staff think of how to improve your professional experience each day by ensuring all laws and regulations maximize your ability to do what you do best: serve your patients. The work your association does can be as simple as maintaining a local business license or as complicated as getting new legislation passed to change how you perform in your industry. Without your state association, those responsibilities would fall squarely on your shoulders.

Association leaders are often the first in the industry to foresee problems, which means many problems are eliminated before you even find out about them. To keep this cycle functioning properly, it is vital that you become involved. Volunteerism can and should be much more than attending meetings; you can volunteer by calling prospective members in your town. Educate colleagues who have yet to understand what you know about your profession and your professional association. In this way, you are generating new revenue for your association to work more effectively.

If calling a potential member sounds as painful as a trip to the dentist, there are other ways to volunteer. Why not write a letter to a prospective member and explain why you are a member of your association? Associations are always looking for new ideas to share with the profession. If you have an idea you think could improve the profession, why not send it to the association president or executive director? It may be something that can be developed into a seminar or even a new regulation down the road.

So, the next time someone asks if you are a member of your state association, proudly show them your membership card and tell them that without your association, you could not do what you do. Associations are the bedrock of your profession - make sure you’re doing everything in your power to keep yours viable and sound.