Some years ago, John Hunt, then Chief Exec of the BDA wrote: ‘If you are not a member of your professional association, you are riding on the bus without paying your fare’. He was, of course, talking about dentists who weren’t members of the BDA, but that statement is even more true today – and not only for dentists, but for all other members of the dental team as well.

Dental Care Professionals (that is, dental nurses, hygienists, therapists and technicians) are now registered professionals – and with that professional status comes professional responsibility. Responsibility to the patient, responsibility to other members of the dental team – and responsibility to oneself, to do the job properly, to behave like a professional ……… do what professional people do – keep yourself up to date, not just tick the boxes of your CPD requirement, but learn and grow in your chosen profession; treat others – patients and colleagues……… and yourself! – with dignity and respect; be proud of your profession – and join your professional association!

If there is one thing which amazes (no, let’s be honest - infuriates!) me more than all those dental nurses who ring the BADN® office expecting us to offer them help, advice, support and information even though they’ve never bothered to join (in other words, they expect to get something for nothing – paid for by all those dental nurses who DO support BADN), it’s the number of dentists who ring us and expect the same thing - because they’re too tight-fisted to join the BDA or the DPA, but expect an association funded by dental nurses to help them! That’s just riding on the bus without paying a fare – that’s hijacking the whole damn bus!

Whether you are a dental nurse, a hygienist, therapist, technician or dentist – if you want to be treated like a professional, you have to behave like one. One of the best ways to demonstrate your professionalism, make sure your views are heard, influence the future of your profession, is to join your professional association. Make no mistake - dentistry (and I use the word in its widest sense, to include dental nursing, dental hygiene, dental therapy and dental technology) is now a profession. And if you are one of those people who wouldn’t even consider themselves a ‘professional’, who doesn’t understand what all this fuss about ‘professionalism’ is all about, maybe now is the time to start seriously considering that job down at Tesco ………

Pam Swain
MBA LCGI FIAM MCMI is the chief executive of the British Association of Dental Nurses, the UK’s only professional association for dental nurses. Pam has worked for the BADN for 15 years this month, and previously worked for several multi-national enterprises including Hilton International and NATO and in investment banking, in Vienna, Brussels, Bermuda and Boston.

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