Amelia Bray tells why association membership can be vital to a practice manager

Being a practice manager can be a lonely business. There is only one of you within a practice and your day is often spent fire fighting problems that crop up and require your immediate attention. You must be versatile, a great people person, an excellent time solver and all-round super star.

While almost every other member of your team must be registered with the GDC, there is no such regulatory body representing dental practice managers. There is no legal requirement to register with an organisation, meaning there is no official regulation or standard to uphold.

On the plus side, this can amount to more freedom for the practice manager. But what it often means in real life is that practice managers across Britain are reinventing the wheel on a daily basis. They face the same problems, such as CQC and ensuring the implementation of clinical governance, they deal with the same staff issues, such as training, appraisals and sickness, and many do this alone, without much support.

The GDC outlines what it requires from its members and lists what they must achieve in order to maintain their registration. This includes completing CPD, meeting certain standards that are clearly set out by the GDC, and working within a ‘Scope of Practice’. Tick the boxes and you’ve met the criteria. It’s a different world for the practice manager. You have to earn the respect of your team, which chances are has a list of qualifications as long as your arm - without a helpful checklist!

In order to be successful, respected leaders, practice managers need to enhance their ability to do their job effectively and need to adhere to an ethical code.

The professional body for practice managers is the British Dental Practice Managers’ Association. Ours is the only association that represents dental practice managers and we aim to provide networking, forums and tools for the continual professional development of our members, promote training and development, and work with industry-leading partners to promote best practice. We also strive to keep our members updated with information that will help their practices be more successful and profitable.

Why face the task alone, when there is a professional organisation that will help you speed up your road to success by putting you in contact with like-minded individuals? Why navigate the transition from NHS to private singlehandedly when there are scores of practice managers within our organisation who have gone through this process and have plenty of advice and help to offer? Why spend hours setting up in-house recruitment procedures when there are advice sheets and templates already written and ready to download in the Members’ Area of our website?

BDPMA member Seema Sharma says: “As a dentist with a strong interest in practice management, I find the BDPMA an incredibly valuable resource for contacts and networks. I learn best by discussion and the BDPMA gives me a fantastically busy and great place to share management challenges with.”

The BDPMA was formed in 1995 and now has more than 800 members. We aim to be the organisation of choice for dental team members representing the majority of dental practices in the UK. As well as providing expert advice on all aspects of dental management in 16 free publications a year and by email or telephone, we also offer direct networking with more than 1,000 colleagues and dentistry professionals, and personal development and training opportunities with discounts of training events.

As an extra incentive to new members we offer first year introductory e-membership for only £25, with full membership costing £85 a year. You can join us by visiting www.bdpma.org.uk and filling in a simple registration form.

About the author

Amelia Bray joined the industry as a dental nurse back in 1994, having previously worked in veterinary and chiropractic clinics. In 2000 she assisted her boss (now husband) to re-launch the dental practice from a town centre premises to a converted barn in the middle of an apple orchard in the Tamar Valley and at this point assumed the role of practice manager. Amelia completed the Diploma in Professional Practice Management in 2004 and has been involved with the BDPMA since 2000, starting out as Treasurer of the Devon & Cornwall Regional Group and then the National Executive as Assistant Secretary, Secretary, then Treasurer and now Chairman. Away from work she’s a huge mum and step-mum who enjoys cake making and decorating, watching the mighty Green Army (that’s Plymouth Argyle to the uninitiated) and relaxing on her old Land Rover fishing boat with a gin and tonic!