

## **The Work of an AMSN Board of Directors Member**

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One of the questions that frequently comes up during the time of election is “what does the AMSN Board of Directors (BOD) do?” Yes, it is more than sitting on the stage at convention or occasionally posting information on the web site. As a member of the BOD we are charged with setting the direction for the association, ensuring resources, and evaluating performance and outcomes of goals in relation to the values important to the membership (Hnatiuk, 2009). One of the most important activities is assisting members in furthering or advancing the practice of medical surgical nursing.

While the day to day financial activities are handled by the national office staff, the AMSN board of directors is charged with the overall fiduciary responsibility for the organization. Fiduciary responsibility can be viewed from a framework of duties owed to the organization. These are identified as the duty of care, the duty of loyalty and the duty of obedience (Hnatiuk, 2009)

The duty of care involves the committed work of the board members. The BOD works best when all members of the group are active participants and communicate in an open fashion. In other words, the board functions as a team. The open dialogue, the give and take of an ongoing discussion is key to a successful, functional board’s work. The BOD makes knowledge-based decisions and supports consensus as a framework for doing the business of AMSN. This type of decision making and process requires active involvement of each member and commitment to participate in this manner.

The duty of loyalty is crucial to not only an effective BOD but in maintaining ethical standards for the association. This duty requires the member of the BOD to seek the interests of the association over their own. This means members of the BOD must consider personal views as secondary in the decision making process. This also encompasses the concept of conflict of interest. Every member of the BOD signs a conflict of interest statement upon election. The BOD must consider any potential conflicts that may be identified as discussions and decisions are made.

The final duty is that of obedience. Obedience in this setting means acting in accordance with AMSN’s mission, vision, policies and practices (Hnatiuk, 2009). As a member of the BOD, group decisions are made and the member is duty bound to support and uphold those decisions. The AMSN board works to make knowledgeable, evidenced-based decisions through a consensus building process. Once a decision is made all members of the board are in agreement they will live with and support that decision.

Fiduciary responsibility includes establishment and monitoring of the associations finances. The national staff is essential in assisting the treasurer and the board in creating and maintaining the association’s budget. The board examines activities and potential activities as to the financial risk and benefit to the association. There are times when tough decisions are made to not pursue an existing activity or to decline the

opportunity to start something new because it doesn't seem to be wise from a financial point of view. With the recent uncertain economic climate, the AMSN BOD has worked diligently to provide sound financial decisions for the organization.

Ensuring the use of AMSN's resources includes working with the members and volunteer groups to achieve activities of the strategic and business plan. The board works with the national office staff to provide services to the members. These activities include such things as: convention and meeting planning, AMSN publications, educational offerings, the AMSN website, Med-Surg Nurses week, and supporting certification, etc.

In setting the direction of the association, the BOD determines the policies and strengths that will lead AMSN into the future and the metrics that will measure the outcomes achieved. The board has to consider current needs and trends in health care and the direction it all appears to be moving. The board works to consider the organization a year from now, five years from now and beyond.

As in all plans, it is important for the BOD to manage ongoing assessment of the strategic plan and activities of the association, volunteer units and services provided for the member. Volunteer units provide data as courses of action (charters) are implemented and completed. Liaisons from the BOD serve as a vital link to the volunteer units. Assessment involves tracking the progress toward meeting the objectives of the strategic plan. The AMSN BOD gathers data from the membership through a variety of methods to seek input and determine value satisfaction.

Professional growth and refining/advancing the practice of medical-surgical nursing is an important goal of the BOD. The board works with various volunteer leaders to accomplish this. It is important for the BOD to stay abreast of issues facing the medical-surgical nurse. The BOD gathers information from its members, its leaders and the national office staff. The board also seeks information and alliances with other nursing and health related groups. When necessary the board responds to issues or makes plans for participation in activities in order to promote and protect the practice of the medical-surgical nurse.

To accomplish the work of the organization, the BOD meets four times a year in the winter, late spring and two times during the annual convention. Each member of the board works with various volunteer units and leaders. The board reports on the activities of the group during monthly conference calls. In addition to monthly conference calls, there is substantial work done several times a week electronically. Occasionally members of the board are called upon to represent AMSN at other national and regional meetings. Key to the role of a board member is the ability to communicate and function in a group setting. The board member must have daily access to email and be functional in electronic forms of communication. While not everyone is a computer expert, the board member must be able to function in that environment.

All of this sounds like a lot of work. Sometimes it is. However, in the process there is a tremendous opportunity to meet and work with nurses from across many

geographic areas, practice settings and points of view. Participating as a member of the BOD enhances your networking circle and knowledge base of medical-surgical nursing. AMSN board members have the rare opportunity of both shaping the future of the association and enhancing personal leadership skills. The work of AMSN and the BOD promotes excellence in medical-surgical nursing and has a positive impact on the entire nursing profession. This translates to improved patient care and outcomes.

Hnatiuk, C.N. (2009). *Mentoring the stars: A program for volunteer board leaders*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Pitman, NJ: Anthony J. Jannetti, Inc.