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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Age of the Veterinary Nurse Has Arrived!

Part 2: Taking Charge

Last issue I discussed the topic of veterinary nurse initiative (VNI) and the proposed unification of credentialed titles, which hopefully will reduce confusion and improve the visibility of nurses. However, improving the profile of veterinary nursing does nothing for our vital team members if we don't seize this moment to implement their much-needed roles as skilled professionals.

There are some tasks that a veterinary nurse can perform, under varying degrees of supervision. Some states will allow our nurses to induce and administer anesthesia, suture wounds and apply casts to limbs. These types of tasks are what we should fight for our nurses to be doing in our practices because they empower nurses in patient care, improve the efficiency of the team, and, undoubtedly, increase job fulfillment.

The arguments against higher levels of team integration and increased responsibility levels for our nurses often revolve around the financial impact on the practice of employing a higher number of trained and qualified nurses. Does it make financial, or business, management sense to task them as practice managers, office clerks, receptionists, or kennel hands when they are training, or have qualified, to become veterinary nurses? Over a decade ago, average annual practice revenues approached \$100,000 for each credentialed veterinary nurse in the practice.¹ So the financial arguments should end, and we should now be looking at how far we can advance their roles as part of the team.

**“Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much.”**

— Helen Keller

Perhaps we should start looking at advances the human medical field has made in integrating physicians' assistants (PAs) and nurse practitioners. A large majority of human patients regard PAs as trusted healthcare providers who make it easier to get a medical appointment and improve the quality of healthcare.

How long do we have to wait in veterinary medicine until we start recognizing the comparable role that our veterinary nurses have for us and the profession?

If it is not financial reasoning holding this implementation back, then maybe it's our fear that as supervising veterinarians we are responsible for the outcome of any task performed within the practice. If this is the case, then it's time for us to show our trust in our nurses and let them take charge of a share of the patient-related tasks and care. Empowering them will work better than just changing their job title. **TVP**

¹Fanning J, Shepherd AJ. “Contribution of veterinary technicians to veterinary business revenue” 2007, *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 2010; 236 (8):846.