



HERE'S A SECRET ...

Veterinarians Shouldn't Do It All

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I shrugged my shoulders and chuckled, surrounded by my assigned blood sample, a few broken coverslips, some wadded paper towels, and lots of slides, very few of which had anything with a passing resemblance to the blood smear I was assigned to create. Hematology was clearly not going to be one of my talents. My instructor hustled over and nervously asked, "What are you going to do when you get into practice?" I looked over and without hesitation replied, "I am going to hire excellent veterinary technicians."

And I did. In fact, to this day I am not good at making blood smears. I can't operate our CBC or blood chemistry machines, I rarely take a radiograph, I don't even draw blood much anymore—and I think I am still a pretty good veterinarian. It's all because I have surrounded myself with the best partners I can: excellent veterinary nurses/technicians. Our industry has changed and it is past time that we recognize it. As veterinarians are engaged in more advanced diagnostics such as ultrasound and CT and doing advanced surgeries including dental procedures and fracture repairs, we are forced to accept that we need to surround ourselves with highly educated and trained partners. There is simply no reason that

veterinarians need to be able to "do it all" any more. In fact, it is far healthier for us to accept that we need to do less and trust our colleagues more.

When is the last time your MD drew your blood in their office? I encourage a reread of your state's veterinary practice act because you may be surprised what a small number of tasks are truly the exclusive responsibility of the veterinarian. If we limit ourselves to diagnosing, prescribing, prognosticating, and surgery and reconsider the vast array of advanced skills that should be done by veterinary nurses/technicians, think of how much more we could do each day! While it is always nice to contribute to the team, my coworkers appreciate my help folding towels and cleaning cages more than when I "help" by taking crooked radiographs, overstaining diagnostic samples, and accidentally shutting off the CBC machine when I try to reset it. I was practically tackled the last time I tried to "fix" a fluid pump.

As we face an ever-growing shortage of veterinary nurses/technicians, we need to make every effort to ensure those in our field have satisfying lifelong careers with opportunities for growth and advancement. As we approach National Veterinary Technician Week this year, instead of investing in a pizza party, consider investing your time and help build career paths for members of your team based on their goals. Behavior, dentistry, radiology, and anesthesia technician experts are needed and, let's be honest, it is really, really nice to not worry about how bad you are at blood smears. **TVP**

Ben Kirchner

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This column is titled "The Secret Life Vets" so I can talk about the secrets that really should be considered well-known truths. These are the not-so-secret secrets that can help change our thinking and our profession for the better.

