

Am I a Veterinary Nurse?

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Am I a veterinary nurse? For me, the answer is a resounding “YES!” I am proud to say that my role in patient and client care is equal to or greater than that of a human nurse.

Let me take you back...

I am a 1976 graduate of the veterinary technology program offered by Michigan State University (MSU). My educational journey provided me with the opportunity to work side by side with junior and senior veterinary students through all of the medical rotations in small and large animal medicine. I worked hard to gain all that knowledge.

When I received my degree, I knew I was qualified to offer outstanding medical care based on my training in each rotation. I was an anesthesia nurse, a medical nurse, a surgical nurse—and yes, surgical technician—a laboratory technician, and a radiology technician. I could discuss medications, complications, side effects, and home care with both veterinarians and clients.

I worked in private practice for a bit and then went back to MSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital. I was one of the veterinary nurses managing the medicine wards and teaching the veterinary technician students and veterinary students. We worked side by side. The students experienced working with a team and recognized what each team member brought to overall patient care.

When a pet owner asks, “What is a veterinary technician?”, I am proud to say that I am a veterinary nurse. Everyone has had contact with a nurse. Nurses have respect from patients and doctors. Nurses provide outstanding medical care. It is our job as veterinary technicians to answer the question of what we do in a

way that clients can understand, and in my opinion, that means using the term *veterinary nurse*.

NAVTA's Veterinary Nurse Initiative (VNI) is built on the recommendation to reduce confusion about the role of veterinary technicians by having one title, nationwide, with standardized guidelines and requirements to protect it. On behalf of all veterinary technicians, NAVTA is forging relationships with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the AVMA Committee on Education and Activities, the American Association of Veterinary State Boards, the Association of Veterinary Technician Educators, and nursing associations to achieve this goal. (For more information about the VNI, read the update by Ken Yagi and Heather Prendergast on page 60.)

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It is now our turn! Veterinarians need to recognize the value of credentialed veterinary technicians/nurses. We have the talent and knowledge to do many of the patient care activities that are now being performed by veterinarians, thereby allowing veterinarians to use more of their own hard-earned training.

So what should we do? Speak up, stand up, and proudly state, “I can do it all! I have the training and credentials to increase the level of patient care.” Not only to clients, but also to veterinarians. Until veterinarians rally behind us and help us drive change, change will not happen. By educating our clients to expect the level of care a credentialed “veterinary nurse” can provide their furry, scaled, or feathered family member, we can help drive it ourselves. ■

Do you have a story you'd like to share? Write me at ljohnson@navc.com.