



**FEEL NO PAIN** As a CVPP, a veterinary nurse can be more involved in the analgesic plan for their patients.



**MEET THE AUTHOR**

**Tasha McNerney, BS, CVT, CVPP, VTS (Anesthesia)**  
Mt. Laurel Animal Hospital,  
Glenside, Pa.

# No Pain, All Gain: Becoming a Certified Veterinary Pain Practitioner

**P**icture this: you're stuck in a career rut.

You love your patients, but vaccines and skin issues are just not floating your boat anymore. Are you a credentialed veterinary technician? Do you ever wonder about other career opportunities? Of course you do! Veterinary nurses are educated, dedicated, and compassionate people who always strive to give the best to their patients.

Tasha began working in the veterinary field in 1998 as a veterinary assistant. She attended Michigan State University, and in 2002, she obtained a bachelor's of science in wildlife biology. In 2003, Tasha began her veterinary technician training at Manor College in Jenkintown, Pa., where she earned an associate's in science degree in veterinary technology. She became a VTS in anesthesia in 2015 and is a Certified Veterinary Pain Practitioner who works closely with the IVAPM to educate the public about animal pain awareness. She lectures frequently on various anesthesia and pain management topics. In her spare time, Tasha enjoys reading and spending time with her son.

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Gone are the days of the veterinary nurse simply holding an animal or just stocking the exam room. Now veterinary nurses are using their superpowers to further their education and become dynamic participants in the field of veterinary medicine to offer high-quality patient care.

Today, veterinary nurses can pursue further training and specialization in a variety of specialist avenues, including dentistry, anesthesia, internal medicine, and emergency and critical care—and also in the field of pain management.

Veterinary nurses and veterinarians involved in pain management help strengthen the practice's bond with animals and with clients. As pain management has become an important specialty area in human medicine, it has led to a greater awareness of pain in animals. Pet owners want the best for their furry family members, and that includes top-of-the-line pain management.

In veterinary medicine, we now know that pain is best managed through a multi-disciplinary approach and we can best achieve effective pain management through cooperation, sharing knowledge, and the collective wisdom of veterinary professionals from many disciplines, such as pharmacology, physical rehabilitation, acupuncture, and anesthesia.

The International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management's (IVAPM) program grants the title of Certified Veterinary Pain Practitioner (CVPP) for veterinarians and credentialed veterinary technicians or, Certified Animal Pain Practitioner (CAPP) for physical therapists and physical therapist assistants with certification in canine rehabilitation, for candidates who complete the program and pass a certification test. The certification program emphasizes the value of the many disciplines capable of enhancing patient comfort and quality of life and educates about a variety of modalities.

In addition, applicants must have a current membership and have been a member of the IVAPM for at least one year prior to sitting for the exam. Requirements are the same for veterinarians and veterinary nurses. The application cycle closes every year on December 31. By the deadline, candidates will need to have submitted a completed application, a letter of good standing, 2 case reports, proof of completion of the continuing education requirements, and verification of their pain management skills checklist.



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The checklist areas include:

- Analgesic drug therapies
- Analgesic adjunct therapies
- Physical rehabilitation methods
- Complementary and alternative therapies, such as acupuncture and massage

By using a multimodal approach, the CVPP can use analgesic drug therapies along with physical therapy techniques such as massage, hydrotherapy, and acupuncture to create a multidimensional pain management plan.



**ON THE JOB**  
A CVPP's duties include calculating analgesic constant rate infusions for postoperative patients.



Veterinary nurses can now become certified in acupuncture, massage therapy, reiki, and various other pain management modalities.



After the checklist and case reports have been reviewed and approved, the CVPP candidate will sit for an examination. The exam is offered once a year in September as an on-site examination in conjunction with the IVAPM's annual meeting held during the International Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Symposium. It is also offered online at various test sites. The exam covers the current knowledge (i.e., publications from the past 10 years) regarding veterinary pain management in addition to elements specific to rehabilitation and acupuncture. It is closed book and consists of 100 questions. Time is limited to 3 hours. Full disclosure: I failed this test the first time around and had to re-test the following year. It was very challenging, and let's just say I didn't have all of the acupuncture points memorized.

After obtaining a CVPP certification, you can work together with pet owners and veterinarians to provide the best pain management plans for patients in these ways:

1. Assess the patient's current status and pain management regimen and, together with the owner and veterinarian, create a pain management plan specific to that patient for the best overall outcome.
2. Assist in the acute pain management setting, helping clinics to create protocols under a veterinarian's guidance for postoperative pain scoring and proper analgesic techniques for acute surgical pain.
3. Act as a point person the pet owner can contact and relay information to about the pet's progress. The CVPP can then take this information and work with the veterinarian to make changes to the analgesic plan as necessary to ensure the best outcome for that patient.

By obtaining your CVPP credential, you can also help in the continuing education of your clients and team members. Many veterinary professionals who have obtained the CVPP designation go on to write journal

articles, teach online courses, and lead seminars on various pain management topics.

There are so many opportunities for veterinary nurses when it comes to the ever-expanding field of pain management. Veterinary nurses can now become certified in acupuncture, massage therapy, reiki, and various other pain management modalities.

By reaching the goals associated with CVPP certification, veterinary nurses can increase their patients' safety and comfort, increase the overall morale at your practice, educate pet owners on the importance of proper pain management, and increase client compliance in this area.

Now, it's not all sunshine and puppy kisses. Obtaining your CVPP will require a big-time commitment. *Mine took approximately 2 years total.* And, you need to be employed at a practice that supports veterinary nurses being an active part of the medical process. But if you do jump through the hoops, your patients will have more comfortable recoveries from surgery and older animals will cope with chronic pain better because of your efforts.

To get started on the path to become a CVPP, visit: [ivapm.org/professionals/ivapm-certification-cvpp](http://ivapm.org/professionals/ivapm-certification-cvpp). **TVN**



Sarah Strowman