credentialing requirements, title protection, scope of practice, reciprocity—in my role on the board of directors of NAVTA, I’ve reached a point where I hear these words almost daily. The leaders of NAVTA and the Veterinary Nurse Initiative are working diligently to continue pushing our profession toward a unified future in which all the aforementioned issues will be addressed for the generations of credentialed veterinary nurses/technicians to come. But, for the time being, we are not cohesively there yet.
Kenichiro Yagi, MS, RVT, VTS (ECC, SAIM), and Ashli Selke, RVT, CVT, addressed the importance of these issues and their role in advancing the profession in the Spring 2022 issue of Today’s Veterinary Nurse (bit.ly/3MkNbNu). However, they also note that advocating for change by “bringing 50 different states to agree fully on every detail down to the scope of practice of a profession is a very heavy lift and takes years of work.”

While advocacy at the national and state level is a key piece in seeing change for the profession, individual contribution can go a long way in making a difference while the wheels of change slowly move in the political arena. Take the time to look in the mirror and consider the role you can play in the march toward a better future for veterinary nurses/technicians. Here are a few ways to start.

**TALK THE TALK**
Use words that will solidify your role as an integral part of the veterinary healthcare team. Instead of telling a client, “We’re going to take your dog back for some bloodwork,” step it up by using medical terminology. Explain what each team member is doing. Alter your communication style to say: “I am a credentialed veterinary technician and I will be collecting a blood sample for a complete blood count and a chemistry analysis as Dr. Jones recommended for Brutus’ care today. This will give us details on Brutus’ overall health and organ function. Dr. Jones will review these results and will be back in with you shortly.” Use words, behavior, and conversation to earn the client’s respect as a veterinary nurse who has significant training and skills. This communication style will also give your clinic value behind services rendered.

**ADVOCATE FOR HIGHER UTILIZATION AND PAY**
An AVMA study found that a clinic earns on average $93,311 per each additional credentialed veterinary technician present due to high efficiency, leverage, and utilization between doctors and veterinary nurses. If you want to walk into a manager’s office and request a raise, prepare to talk about how you’ve created more revenue for your clinic. Veterinary nurse appointments, providing training or client education, and inventory management all count as examples. If low utilization is a problem, look to the Veterinary Technician Utilization Tool (vtutilization.com) for a self-assessment of your clinic. If your clinic lags in this area, schedule a dedicated time to discuss the issue one-on-one with a leader. Be respectful and prepared to outline the issue and the advantages of increasing utilization.

**DISCUSS PAY WITH OTHER CREDENTIALED TECHNICIANS**
Under the National Labor Relations Act, you have the federal right to discuss wages with both coworkers and other credentialed technicians in your community, state, and nation. The Veterinary Emergency Group has also published their pay scales and widely marketed their compensation, which has greatly impacted the veterinary practice wage discussion in the United States. Most public universities also publish a salary guide for all non-student employees, including veterinary school faculty. Encourage a standard wage system within your practice that will align with both your personal self-worth as a veterinary nurse and community standards.

**DON’T FEED YOUR NEW HIRES TO THE WOLVES**
Create a development or training program for newly hired credentialed technicians. Far too often, there are inadequate training standards. Being thrown out onto the floor to “figure it out” is damaging and cultivates a psychologically unsafe space for your new hire, which could lead to burnout and depression. Create a welcoming environment within your practice, stop bullying or gossiping, and embrace your new work family member. Pair them with a mentor for training and create a packet to document their progress. Not only will this create a meaningful bond with your coworkers, but it allows our profession to be viewed as just that—a profession.

**SEE ONE. DO ONE. TEACH ONE.**
Go to school and earn that degree. Pass the Veterinary Technician National Examination. Get hired at your practice and attend all the continuing education you can find on both medical and professional topics. Become the mentor you wish you had. Educate the public with your professional knowledge. Be the reason a young veterinary nurse got that “thank you” card. Your mentorship will create a cascading effect that results in better patient care and higher career satisfaction.
PARTICIPATE IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

NAVTA estimates there are 100,000 current credentialed technicians in the United States, yet only 8,000 are members of the organization as of 2022. Indiana, for example, has approximately 1,000 RVTs, yet roughly 100 are part of the state’s veterinary technician association. When a bill lands on your state’s floor for discussion regarding the profession, where will you be? “It’s every single person’s job to fix industry issues,” says Amy Newfield, CVT, VTS (ECC), leadership expert and author of *Oops, I Became a Manager*. We implore you to let your voice be heard by joining a professional, state, or national organization and demand that they listen to your ideas and solutions. If you would like to stay in your community, volunteer for an agricultural extension pillar such as 4-H, as they have both large and small animal projects and poster projects, including ones promoting veterinary science. Show the community how rewarding a career in veterinary nursing can be.

References


Mariel Hendricks

Mariel graduated with a bachelor’s degree from Purdue University’s veterinary technology program in 2010. She quickly found her niche in surgical assisting and anesthesia and remained in this specialty role until 2021. Mariel then transitioned her career to veterinary nursing and assistant staff development with Noah’s Animal Hospitals. Mariel served on Indiana’s Veterinary Technician Association from 2018 to 2021 and was elected to an executive board member position with NAVTA in 2022. She enjoys hiking and fishing with her 2 children, volunteers as a project leader for her county’s 4-H veterinary science project, and is enrolled in Lincoln Memorial University’s Masters of Veterinary Education program. Her English bulldog, Margo, keeps the family on their toes with her playfulness and inquisitive personality!