

## 2024 Report on VSOC/ABVS (Veterinary Specialty Organizations Committee of the AVMA)

Annual meeting held March 4, 2024 at AVMA Headquarters in Schaumburg, IL

1. Report from Dr. Granstrom -Assistant VP of AVMA
  - a. The AVMA has hired a consultant to work with an ad hoc committee to explore issues related to quality of training provided to interns and residents and whether there should be an accreditation/oversight committee for all internships and residencies. This is an exploratory committee.
    - i. Will be looking for two individuals that recently completed *residency* programs, two individuals that recently completed internships – 1 now in a residency and 1 in general practice, 1 residency program director from private practice and 1 from an academic program – send “nominations” to Executive Board (appointments will be made by VSOC Executive Board)
  - b. The AVMA is looking at workforce issues and is active in advocacy with lobbyists, some of the issues that have been arising in various states include:
    - i. Expanding use of what has been termed “mid-level practitioners” = veterinary technicians/individuals with MS degrees and the scope of work that they are allowed to perform under State Veterinary Practice Acts
      1. The AVMA’s position is that a more important issue is the education of veterinarians to fully utilize the skills of veterinary technicians, the AVMA is opposed to changing State Practice Acts to allow non-veterinarians to perform surgeries, make diagnoses and/or prescribe medications
      2. Despite AVMA lobbying, Florida’s House of Representatives has passed legislation that would enable some veterinary technicians to perform some surgeries and other procedures; the AVMA is lobbying to hopefully convince Senators not to pass the bill in the Senate
      3. Colorado and some other states are also considering allowing veterinary technicians to perform surgeries and provide medical care for animals – Colorado and Midwestern have veterinary technology MS degree programs to train these individuals
    - ii. Several states are considering legislation that would change the criteria for establishment of Veterinary Client Patient Relationship – the AVMA opposes the elimination of physical examinations as part

of establishing a VCPR – the goal is maintaining Quality of care -- telemedicine does not provide all of the information that can be gained through in person evaluations.

1. On-line pharmacies are investing huge sums of money in lobbying for changes in VCPR – Dutch Pet and Chewy have sponsored this type of legislation in California, Florida and other states – they want Direct to Consumer sales without requiring an “in person” veterinary evaluation to diagnose and prescribe medications
- iii. Another major concern relating to workforce issues is the future of veterinary education – there are at least 12 new schools/colleges of veterinary medicine starting in the United States, finding faculty to teach students in these new colleges/schools is going to be a challenge. Most or all of these will be using distributive clinical training and oversight of this type of training is also a challenge
2. Report from Dr. Knapp, AVMA BOD Representative to VSOC/ABVS
  - a. Further discussed the reasons the AVMA is opposing changes to VPCR and State Practice Acts that would enable veterinary technicians to perform surgeries or diagnose and prescribe medications – primary consideration is ensuring quality of care which is best provided by veterinarians
  - b. The AVMA is continuing to expand veterinary leadership training – this year’s conference (January) had over 700 attendees; 140 met with legislators in Washington DC
  - c. Lobbying efforts during the past year included (1) success for an exemption for veterinary use of Xylazine without requiring DEA regulations (this was deemed necessary to help ensure continued availability of xylazine for use in large animals); (2) Healthy Dog Importation Act; (3) veterinary initiatives as part of the Farm Act
  - d. A Diversity Equity Inclusion Well-being Belonging Summit will be held in Atlanta this summer; Journey for Teams continues to have monthly roll outs (check AVMA website)
  - e. A new committee is being formed for Advancing Technologies (Artificial Intelligence and other emerging technologies) – will be looking for recommendations of who should serve on this committee (if interested let us know)
  - f. Mike Bailey, a radiologist, is currently the only candidate for the next AVMA President
3. Chris Beyer noted that State Legislatures are influenced by concerns regarding Quality of Care and Professional Boards within States in charge of Veterinary Practice Acts usually have sessions that are open to the public—attending and participating in their meetings can influence decisions (this is how we can

advocate for stricter guidelines for use of terms such as dermatologist as well as for protecting VCPR)

4. The ABVS has requested that VSOC discuss Best Practices for turnover of exam content
  - a. Related to this is discussion of when Founders of a new RVSO or RVS who were involved in exam development would be eligible to take that specialty certification examination
5. Letter of Intent to form a new RVS under ABVP in Wildlife Practice has been received by the ABVS, liaison being appointed.
6. It was noted that the EBVS has active social media initiatives and discussion of whether AVMA would be able to promote veterinary specialties through its social media channels. Dr. Knapp noted that in the past the AVMA spent a lot of money on a marketing campaign that did not seem to make much difference and that these campaigns are very expensive. He will see if the AVMA Marketing Committee can participate in one of VSOCs future meetings. Other ideas to keep in mind
  - a. The AVMA social media focuses on contemporary stories – these can be submitted for consideration (recommended submitting through Ed Murphey who is the AVMA liaison for VSOC and ABVS
  - b. We can submit information on happenings at our meetings for publication in JAVMA
7. One website for Specialties is VetSpecialists.com - 6 RVSOs have formed a coalition of specialists who are featured on this website
8. VSOC reviewed AVMA policies on Guidelines for Veterinary Internships, it would be helpful to define expectations for post-internship competencies and internship milestones
9. Lawyers hired by the AVMA met with VSOC to discuss anti-trust laws and language used in Model Practice Act and in the principles of veterinary medical ethics
  - a. Anti-trust laws prohibit the suppression of competition
  - b. Cannot prohibit individuals from using specialist in \_\_\_\_; can specify that is unethical to say board-certified in \_\_\_\_\_ if that is not true.
  - c. Individuals that advertise as specialists when they are not board-certified may have greater liability if something goes wrong with a patient – if show that harm has occurred may influence State Professional Boards to have stricter terminology in their State Practice Acts, well-being of animals is what will influence legislation
  - d. Several states have specialists licenses, a general license is also needed if will be diagnosing or treating conditions outside of that specialty
10. A major concern this year is the development of Fellowships that are perceived as “infringing” on another specialty – while VSOC and ABVS developed and approved Guidelines for Veterinary Fellowships there is no current regulation – whether there should be will be explored, the concern relating to anti-trust laws

must be considered in addition to consideration of whether deception is occurring and whether any risk to well-being of animals may occur as a consequence of these fellowship programs

- a. The current concerns are with 3 fellowship programs developed by the ABVP
    - i. Fellowship in Orthopedic Surgery
    - ii. Fellowship in Emergency Medicine
    - iii. Fellowship in Pain Management
11. Dr. Heiko Nathues, President of the EBVS provided an update on activities of the EBVS
- a. Hot topics include the development of Flexible/Modular Pathways to specialization
    - i. These are intended to help correct the shortage of specialists.
    - ii. 180 points must be acquired, training may be done over an 8 year period, credits are needed in theoretical (knowledge), practical (clinical) and/or research
    - iii. This is not mandatory – about 50% of specialties are offering Flexible pathways
  - b. I-Restart programs are identifying gaps in training resources and working on filling these, co-funded by the European Union
  - c. The EBVS has an active social media presence with a communications officer – follow them on Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram
  - d. Karen Campbell is the current AVMA – EBVS liaison and will attend their General Assembly in Romania in April.
12. Dr. Larrimore led a brief (due to time limitations) discussion of shortages of veterinary specialists in academia
- a. Surveys have looked at why faculty leave universities
  - b. Distributive models and sharing of faculty workforces will likely be needed
  - c. Training of educators is also needed
  - d. This will be discussed further at a future meeting
13. Next VSOC meetings will be Zoom on May 31, Aug 2 and Nov 8 and in person March 3, 2025.

Submitted by Karen Campbell

March 5, 2024