

AVMA Veterinary Specialty Organizations Committee (VSOC) Updates March 2024 Quarterly Meeting (In-person)

From Your VSOC Representative:

Name: Jane E. Sykes, Outgoing Chair of the Board

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VSOC Executive Subcommittee:

- Dr. Tod Drost (ACVR Rep.) – Chair
- Dr. Leslie Sinn (ACVB Rep.) – Chair-Elect
- Dr. Kris Clothier (ACVM Rep.) – Member-at-Large
- Karen Campbell (ACVD Rep.) – Past Chair

AVMA Staff Supporting VSOC & ABVS:

All correspondence pertaining to annual and triennial reports to ABVS should be directed to Ms. Anne Czeropski (aczeropski@avma.org), who serves as the Administrative Assistant to VSOC & ABVS **and** Dr. Ed Murphey (DACVS) (emurphey@avma.org), AVMA Associate Director of Education & Research.

News and Updates

VSOC minutes from August 18, 2023 meeting were approved.

AVMA Update

Dr. Granstrom (AVMA Asst. Exec. VP) Report

1. Provided an update on the plans for in-person meeting of various stakeholders exploring issues related to quality of training provided and accreditation/oversight organization for all internships and residencies
 - a. AVMA has hired a facilitator; still working on details and logistics for the meeting; next step is deciding on best approach for attendees
 - b. Planned participants include four Diplomates from ABVS-recognized veterinary specialty organizations, two individuals that recently completed residency programs, two individuals that recently completed internships (1 currently in a residency and 1 in general practice), 2 residency program directors from private practice, and 2 from an academic programs
 - c. AVMA will provide more information and requests for participants once logistics have been decided; if possible, they will hold the meeting in conjunction with the annual convention in June 21-25 in Austin, TX
 - d. AVMA fully supports hosting this meeting to explore what may be reasonable and effective solutions for oversight of training programs.

2. Discussed AVMA's focus on the definition of VCPR and how that impacts workforce; workforce development issues are at the forefront of AVMA's priorities; in-person veterinary contact is held as a critical component of the VCPR
 - a. Several companies are pushing to change the definition of VCPR to allow "direct to consumer" sales without requiring an "in person" veterinary evaluation to diagnose health conditions and prescribe medications
 - b. The definition and accreditation of a midlevel "associate" (or mid-level practitioner) between DVM/VMD and credentialed veterinary technician/technologist/nurse is ahead of its time; some programs don't require credentialing as prerequisite so not sure how these programs operate; several non-veterinary animal organizations are providing support for development of this role
 - c. Educational and credentialing process with licensing is an immovable criterion for moving forward with this role
 - d. Must ensure providing the adequate quality of care that can best be done by veterinarian;
 - e. Licensing is determined by individual jurisdictions, so AVMA will continue to work with them to ensure they consider AVMA's guidelines. Florida 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.
3. Discussed the multiple (at least 12) proposed veterinary schools starting in the U.S.; all programs will need to adhere to all of the accreditation requirements including adequate # of quality faculty; most plan to use a distributive model for clinical training and oversight; AVMA wants to support faculty providing specialty education & training

Dr. Robert Knapp (AVMA Board of Directors Liaison to VSOC) Report

1. The AVMA is focusing on issues with the mid-level veterinary associate role are in multiple states on which AVMA is working
2. The AVMA also continues to focus on leadership training; the Leadership Conference (January 2024) had over 700 attendees, and the Advocacy Fly In brought 140 veterinarians and veterinary students to meet with legislators in Washington, DC
3. The DEI summit will be held in Atlanta in November 2024 (Journey for Teams)
4. The lobbying activities for the following were shared: 1) success for an exemption for veterinary use of xylazine minimizing impact of DEA regulations (deemed necessary to help ensure continued availability of xylazine for use in large animals) 2) Healthy Dog Importation Act, and 3) veterinary initiatives as part of the Farm Act
5. Advancing Vet Tech Committee to address barriers to best use of credentialed technicians that may make the mid-level practitioner and unnecessary role was highlighted
6. There is a Task Force now that eventually may become a committee to address AI and advancements in technology in Vet Med
7. Mike Bailey, an ACVR Diplomate, is currently the only candidate for the next AVMA President.

Report from VSOC Representatives of the ABVS

1. Chris Byers noted 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 decision - this is how we can advocate for stricter guidelines for use of terms such as dermatologist and protecting the VCPR
2. Sathya Chinnadurai (Chair of ABVS) gave an update on VSOC 3-year reports:
 - a. ABVS is trying to ensure colleges have JTAs, exam question turnover descriptions, provide clear communication to examinees, and exam creation Diplomates for new RVSOs/RVSSs are prohibited from sitting for exams for at least 3 years following their exam responsibilities
 - b. They requested VSOC discuss best practices for turnover of exam content
 - c. They requested clarification regarding VSOC ABVS representatives
 - i. If an RVSO is “fully or provisionally recognized”, the VSOC representative can sit on ABVS
 - ii. If an RVSO’s recognition is revoked, the representative would leave the VSOC and the ABVS
 - d. To clarify roles for new VSOC members
 - i. VSOC is advocacy (provides consensus of what is important for specialists)
 - ii. ABVS is “regulatory” (4 VSOC, psychometrician, AAVMC, non-specialty, non-clinical, representing the public; 12 total)
3. There is a request for new RVS in Wildlife Clinical Practice within the ABVP; Drs. Cowgill and Kleinhenz agreed act as liaisons to VSOC, to review submitted documents, and provide input on how to strengthen the application

Sub Committee & Liaison Reports

1. Best Current Practices Subcommittee: Drost (Chair), Chinnadurai, Cowgill; nothing to report
2. Advocacy and Communications Subcommittee: Byers (Chair), Barton, Sinn
 - a. The EBVS has active social media initiatives, and whether AVMA would be able to promote veterinary specialties through its social media channels was discussed. Dr. Murphey noted 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 VSOC’s future meetings.
 - b. The AVMA social media focuses on sharing contemporary (ie, published within the past few days) stories, particularly those featuring AVMA members – these can be submitted for consideration (recommended submitting through Ed Murphey)
 - c. We can submit information on happenings at our meetings or college for publication in JAVMA
 - d. Vetspecialists.com is run by ACVIM & includes information from other colleges, promotes specialists to the public, and highlights the triad of owner, generalist, & specialist to provide the best care.

- e. Once AVMA Marketing Committee representative meets with VSOC to share recommendations for social media stories, Chris Byers will send periodic reminders to VSOC members to solicit stories for consideration
- 3. Nominating subcommittee: Clothier (Chair), Odunayo, and Lewis
 - a. Election of New Officers & Committee Members (August 2024 – July 2025)
 - i. Executive Committee
 - a. Chair: *Drost*
 - b. Chair-Elect: *Sinn*
 - c. Member-at-large: *Clothier*
 - d. Past-Chair: *Campbell*
 - e. Daniel Almeida was unanimously elected as the new Member-at-Large
 - f. Kris Clothier was unanimously approved as the Chair-Elect
 - ii. ABVS (term of service 2024-2028)
 - a. Michael Lairmore accepted the nomination
 - b. Ellison Bentley self-nominated due to interest in serving on ABVS
 - c. After elections, Michael Lairmore was elected to serve for the 2024-2028 term
 - b. It was requested the Nominating Committee send out a notification of roles to be filled each year so VSOC members can let them know if they are interested in serving in any of these roles.
- 4. EBVS
 - a. Karen Campbell is VSOC representative to the EBVS
 - b. Dr. Heiko Nathues (EBVS President) joined via Zoom
 - i. EBVS has created an alternative pathway to qualify to sit for exams; allows applicants to use professional experience as qualification criteria
 - ii. ~50% of colleges are looking at implementing this route so residency training is not a requirement to sit for exams
 - iii. Strict requirements for the numbers of credits and maintenance of documentation for respective categories; qualifications are still reviewed by college Diplomates
 - iv. Creates a more inclusive application route but won't decrease the level of expertise needed to become a Diplomate.
 - v. EBVS is working to promote mental health of members (not just candidates); working on conjunction with I-Restart EU program in agri-food production; developing educational modules and trainings.

AVMA Policy Review (AVMA policies can be located [here](#))

- 1. Policies Due for Review; VSOC should provide a recommendation (renew as written, recommend revisions, recommend retire) for these policies
 - a. Policy on Veterinary Internship Guidelines: a revised document was discussed and additional edits to define expectations for post-internship competencies and internship milestones were suggested prior to providing a recommendation to AVMA.
 - b. Policy on Internships and Residencies - unanimously voted to retire this policy.

- c. Policy on Veterinary Internships Disclosure Outline - unanimously voted to retire this policy and rewrite this as an informational document included as a hyperlink in the Policy on Veterinary Internship Guidelines so it can be periodically reviewed.
2. Development of New Policies: Policy on Large Animal Ambulatory Internship Guidelines

Old Business

1. AVMA in-house and consulting counsel 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, and state veterinary boards that include practitioners are not immune from that liability
 - b. Cannot limit the use of 'specialist' specifically to AVMA-recognized specialty organizations (and their Diplomates) but can probably say 'specialist' should be confined to those certified by an ABVS-recognized veterinary specialty organization or another certification of similar rigor and standards; can specify it is unethical to say board-certified in an AVMA-recognized veterinary specialty organization if that is not true.
 - c. Individuals who advertise themselves as specialists when they are not board-certified may have greater liability if something goes wrong with a patient – if one can show harm has occurred, that findings may influence state professional boards to have stricter terminology in their state practice acts; well-being of animals is what will influence legislation (i.e., protection of the public & the animal).
 - d. Several states have specialists' licenses; a general license is also needed if will be diagnosing or treating conditions outside of that specialty.
 - e. The Ethics Guideline (even if not enforced) is an agreement by members of organization not to participate in activities against what was written in the Guideline.
2. Fellowship guidelines/oversight
 - a. Individual colleges are offering fellowships in disciplines that appear to be infringing on specialties covered by other colleges; some of these programs are sponsored by individual institutions or training facilities.
 - b. 3 fellowship programs developed by the ABVP (Fellowship in Orthopedic Surgery, Fellowship in Emergency Medicine, Fellowship in Pain Management) were discussed as examples.
 - c. Once completed, fellows are allowed to use additional post-nominals, but the level of expertise is not defined or regulated.
 - d. Fellowship guidelines were approved by VSOC & ABVS, but there is no recognition process for these programs currently. ABVS will consider the possibility of a recognition process for Fellowship programs.
 - e. Regulation of fellowships may be seen as suppressing competition (similar to issues described by counsel in Model Practice Act & Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics discussion)
 - f. Is there a method to create a list of current or proposed fellowships so VSOC can stay updated?
3. Updated tables with Diplomate numbers was distributed

New Business

1. AI effects on veterinary practice (Drost) - postponed until the next meeting due to time constraints
2. ACVAA statement on veterinarian-led anesthetic care - postponed due to time constraints
3. Veterinary specialist shortage in academia & new CVMs - Michael Lairmore gave a brief update due to time constraints
 - a. Surveys have looked at why faculty leave universities - academia can't compete with starting salaries for trained veterinarians (\$120,000-130,000)
 - b. Distributive models and sharing of faculty workforces will likely be needed
 - c. Training of educators is also needed
 - d. VSOC to submit a recommendation to the AVMA BOD that a task force be formed to identify, and recommend solutions for, issues limiting the recruitment and retainment of specialists in academia. including corporate partners as the largest hiring entities (at least to be part of the conversation); need to determine what practices institutions have that can offer adequate salary & benefit packages

Dates for next meetings

- May 31, August 2, November 8 - virtual meetings via Zoom
- Monday March 3, 2025 – in-person meeting at AVMA HQ in Schaumburg, IL

As always, if you would like the VSOC to discuss / review a specific topic, please let your VSOC Representative know.