Who is on the Health Care Team?

The Veterinarian
A doctor trained to protect the health of both animals and people

The Veterinary Technician
A professional who performs valuable medical and non-medical services in clinical practice

The Hospital Manager
A person responsible for managing the business functions of the practice

The Veterinary Assistant
A professional who supports the veterinarian and/or the veterinary technician in their daily tasks

The Receptionist
The first person to welcome a client into the hospital and often the last person the client sees when they leave

Other Team Members
A group which may include an adoption counselor, grief counselor, administrative assistant, kennel or barn workers, and part-time volunteers

Resources for more information

Mission Statement
The mission of the AVMA is to improve animal and human health and advance the veterinary medical profession.

American Veterinary Medical Association
(AVMA)

www.avma.org

National Association of
Veterinary Technicians in America
(NAVTA)

www.navta.net

Veterinary Hospital Managers Association
(VHMA)

www.vhma.org

The Veterinary Health Care Team
supporting the work of veterinarians

AVMA Veterinary Career Series

Every veterinary hospital staff consists of a team of caring individuals, each contributing his or her unique abilities to ensure high quality veterinary care for animals and compassionate interactions with animal owners. Depending upon the size of the hospital, the team may employ from three to more than 30 people but, regardless of size, dedication to service remains a top priority.

The Veterinarian – Leading the Team

Veterinarians are doctors trained to protect the health of both animals and people. In a clinical hospital environment, veterinarians work with large and small animals to evaluate animals' health, diagnose and treat illnesses, provide routine preventive care (such as vaccines), prescribe medication, and perform surgery. Like physicians, some veterinarians specialize in areas such as surgery, internal medicine, ophthalmology or dentistry.

In addition to opportunities in clinical practice, veterinarians may choose to work in zoos, wildlife parks, or aquariums; or focus on public health, regulatory medicine, academia, or research. Personal attributes that contribute to a successful career as a veterinarian in clinical practice include a strong science and math education, the ability to work well with animals and their owners, basic business and management training, and leadership and organizational skills.

The Veterinary Technician

Veterinary technicians perform valuable medical and non-medical services in clinical practice. They are graduates of an AVMA-accredited program in veterinary technology usually leading to an Associate or Bachelor degree. The veterinary technician is educated and trained to support the veterinarian by assisting with surgery, laboratory procedures, radiography, anesthesiology, prescribed treatment and nursing, and client education. Almost every state requires a veterinary technician to pass a credentialing exam to ensure a high level of competency.

Some veterinary technicians pursue specialties in emergency and critical care, anesthesiology, internal medicine, animal behavior, or dentistry. Personal attributes that contribute to a successful career as a veterinary technician in clinical practice include a strong science background, an ability to work well with people and animals, and good communication and decision-making skills.

The Veterinary Hospital Manager

Most large veterinary hospitals find that having a hospital (or practice) manager greatly improves the team's efficiency. This person is responsible for managing the business functions of the practice. Depending upon the size and type of hospital, the manager's duties could include personnel hiring and supervision, budget and inventory management, accounting, marketing, and developing recordkeeping and other business standards for practice. A strong business background, computer knowledge, and desire to work with people are key attributes for success as a hospital manager.

The Veterinary Assistant

In some hospitals, a veterinary assistant supports the veterinarian and/or the veterinary technician in their daily tasks. The assistant may be asked to perform kennel work, assist in the restraint and handling of animals, feed and exercise the animals, or spend time on clerical duties. There is no credentialing exam for the veterinary assistant; however, training programs are available (see www.navta.net). The ability to listen, communicate efficiently, and handle multiple assignments are skills that make a veterinary assistant an important member of the hospital team.

The Receptionist

The receptionist or client service representative is usually the first person to welcome a client into the hospital and the last person the client sees when they leave. The interactions he or she has with a client can determine how the client perceives the quality of medical services being offered. A good receptionist must have excellent communication skills and be able to handle a variety of questions and requests from clients and the public. In addition to setting appointments, responding to inquiries about hospital services, greeting clients, and managing callbacks, a receptionist may also perform accounting, marketing, or client counseling duties. A customer service attitude, the ability to manage multiple tasks, and professionalism under stress are important attributes for a hospital receptionist.

Other Team Members

The hospital team may also include an adoption counselor, a grief counselor, administrative assistant, kennel or barn workers, and part-time volunteers. Everyone has an important role to play in assuring the health and well-being of the hospital's patients and the owners who care for them.