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Open Letter to the Veterinary Community and the Public

Dear Colleagues, Pet Owners, and Stakeholders,

We, the Academy of Internal Medicine for Veterinary Technicians (AIMVT), as an organization committed to the advancement of veterinary technicians in internal medicine and the well-being of our patients, feel compelled to address a pressing issue within our field.¹ The emergence of the mid-level practitioner (MLP) position in veterinary medicine, such as the Veterinary Professional Associate recently approved in Colorado, has sparked significant debate and concern among veterinary professionals.

Formal education and credentialing programs ensure that credentialed veterinary technicians receive a thorough and standardized education, equipping them with the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills. This foundation not only enhances their capability to perform advanced procedures but also ensures consistency in the quality of care provided. In contrast on-the-job training (OJT) can provide practical experience, however it often lacks the comprehensive and structured learning that formal education offers. OJT leads to inconsistencies in skill levels and knowledge, as training quality can vary widely depending on the practice and available resources.

Our Position Opposing Mid-Level Practitioners Position in Veterinary Medicine

While the intention behind the idea of mid-level practitioners is to alleviate the workload of veterinarians and improve access to care, we believe that this approach poses several risks:

1. ****Quality of Care****: The rigorous, regulated, extensive training that veterinarians and veterinary technicians undergo² equips them with the comprehensive knowledge and clinical skills necessary to care for our patients with a wide range of animal health issues. Introducing MLP with less extensive training could compromise the quality of care that pets receive.
2. ****Veterinary Team Dynamics****: The introduction of mid-level practitioners may disrupt the established dynamics and roles within veterinary teams. Credentialed veterinary technicians (CVT), and even more so veterinary technician specialists (VTS), who play a crucial role in supporting veterinarians, may find their roles are marginalized or confused by the presence of mid-level practitioners. The terminology insinuates a position

¹ The Mission Statement of AIMVT, adopted 2004 [About Us - AIMVT](#)

² [AVMA](#)

above both of these currently defined positions. In addition, the general public is largely unaware of the differences between veterinary assistants (VA), CVT, and VTS.

3. **Compensation**: Introducing MLP positions into the veterinary field might lead to wage compression, where the pay for MLP is not sufficiently differentiated from that of the current members of the veterinary team, potentially undervaluing their contributions. This shift could result in budget constraints that limit the capacity for fair compensation and professional growth opportunities for VA and CVT, including those pursuing specialist certifications. All of this would lead to further exodus of support staff from the field.

4. **Regulatory and Liability**: The introduction of MLP would necessitate the creation of new regulatory frameworks to define their scope of practice, educational requirements, and certification processes. This could lead to increased complexity in veterinary regulations and potential inconsistencies across different regions. Without a robust regulatory structure, there is a risk that MLP may not receive adequate training, potentially compromising patient safety. Mistakes in diagnosis, treatment planning, and surgical procedures could lead to adverse outcomes for animals and increased liability for veterinary practices. One of the primary concerns is the liability associated with MLP. Veterinarians who supervise MLP might be held legally responsible for their actions, which could lead to increased malpractice claims and higher insurance premiums. Additionally, existing veterinary malpractice policies may not cover these supervising veterinarians if they are not the MLPs' employers.

Our Support for Veterinary Technician Specialists

AIMVT advocates for the enhancement and recognition of the VTS position. Veterinary technician specialists are highly trained professionals who have undergone additional education and certification in specific areas of veterinary medicine.³

Supporting and expanding the VTS role offers several benefits:

1. **Elevated Standards**: By promoting the VTS position, we uphold high standards of care and ensure that specialized knowledge is applied in complex cases. Veterinary technician specialists possess the expertise necessary to perform advanced procedures and support veterinarians in delivering exceptional care. At the urging of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) formed the Committee of Veterinary Technician Specialists in 1994 to develop and enforce the standards of VTS and Specialty Academies.
2. **Training and Credentialing**: The rigorous training and certification process required for VTS ensures that these professionals possess advanced knowledge and skills in specific areas of veterinary medicine. By emphasizing the importance of continued education and specialization, we can maintain high standards of care.

³ CVTS of NAVTA



Supporting VTS roles enhances the professional development of CVT, ensuring they are well-prepared to assist in complex cases and contribute significantly to the veterinary team and the improvement of patient outcomes.

3. ****Team Synergy****: Strengthening the VTS role fosters a cohesive and efficient veterinary team. VA, CVT, and VTS can continue to work collaboratively with veterinarians, each contributing their unique skills and expertise for the benefit of the patient. The recent legislative changes in Arkansas highlight the possibilities of the VTS's skills and knowledge.

4. ****Professional Growth****: Recognizing and expanding the VTS role provides career advancement opportunities for CVT and VA. This not only enhances job satisfaction but also attracts dedicated individuals to the profession, thereby addressing workforce challenges in a sustainable manner. While proponents of MLP claim that obtaining a VTS is less accessible to credentialed veterinary technicians than completing a Master's degree (currently the proposed requirement to become a MLP), this is belied by the fact that there are a very small number of Bachelor degree programs in veterinary technology/nursing and very few current credentialed veterinary technicians have the requisite education to qualify for acceptance to a Master's degree program, as the majority hold a two-year degree. Additionally, the cost of Master's degree programs is completely out of reach for the majority of veterinary team members. By contrast, credentialed veterinary technicians can pursue VTS certification at a much lower, and more accessible cost.

Our Call to Action

We urge veterinary associations, educational institutions, policymakers, and the broader veterinary community to reconsider the implementation of MLP positions. The implementation of a MLP role should not be considered until the veterinary profession can utilize our VA, CVT, and VTS' appropriately to the full extent of their respective positions. Also, the fact that CVT are still not recognized as a licensed profession by all 50 states compounds the issue. Instead, let us focus on empowering CVT through specialized training and certification programs and by educating the public on the differentiation of these roles as they exist.

Together, we can ensure that our beloved pets receive the highest standard of care, while fostering a veterinary workforce that is skilled, cohesive, and dedicated to the health and well-being of animals.

Thank you for your attention and support.

Sincerely,

Academy of Internal Medicine Veterinary Technicians

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