

# Student Mentorship Program

## An Introduction



### Essential for the Program

Most veterinary owners have their liability insurance coverage through the AVMA Professional Liability & Insurance Trust (PLIT). For students to be covered during this program, you **MUST** be a member of SAVMA and fill out and sign a PLIT Mentorship Form (the mentoring veterinarian must also sign the form).

Once you have completed the Mentorship Form, you need to submit it, along with a \$10 payment, to the PLIT. The payment is a one-time fee that is good for one year; however, each time you participate in such a mentorship program, you **MUST** fill out a new form and repeat the process. According to the PLIT, the signed form **MUST** be received by them **PRIOR** to the start of your mentorship or the veterinarian will not receive liability coverage for your work in the practice.

You can access a PDF of the PLIT Mentorship Form on the OVMA Web site at <http://oregonvma.org/resources/student-mentorship-program>. There you also will find and can review a list of those practices that are interested in mentoring a student during the summer.

### How the Program Works

We are asking participating veterinary students to:

1. Commit to developing their professional skills in a responsible and serious manner
2. Be respectful of the patients and animal owners at all times
3. Be respectful of the veterinarian's time by using other staff and books as a learning resource when available
4. Complete the task list (copy enclosed)
5. Restrain animals and clean cages, floors, stalls, and instruments as needed to help keep the practice running smoothly
6. Evaluate the practice and the program at the completion of the mentorship

In return, we are asking the veterinary mentor to:

1. Permit the student to follow at least one case daily with her/him
2. Allow the student to scrub in on and assist with at least one surgical case
3. Holds rounds once a week to discuss cases with the student
4. Discuss the interpretation of diagnostic testing and imaging
5. Provide opportunities for students to complete the tasks on their list
6. Provide some measure of financial compensation for their time (generally \$250 to \$400 per 40-hour work week)
7. Evaluate the student and the program at the completion of the mentorship

## **How to Get Started**

Visit the OVMA Web site at <http://oregonvma.org/resources/student-mentorship-program> to view a list of participating practices. The list of practices will be updated as needed, so you may want to check back from time to time.

Once you have identified and selected the practice you would like to contact, draft a letter of introduction to the veterinarian. If you are applying for more than one practice, you should compose a personal letter for each practice. Generally, the letter should be no longer than one page and should inform the practice of who you are, your year in veterinary school, the skills you will bring to the practice, what you hope to achieve by participating in the program, and any special interest that you may have.

In addition to the letter of introduction, include a resume that is no longer than two pages. This should detail your work history, with a focus on veterinary-related work and research. Also include at least one personal reference.

Send the packet to the clinic by the requested method (mail, fax or e-mail) and wait to hear from the practice. Practices will review the information and contact students at their discretion. Some practices may request an interview, while some will make their decision based on the letter of introduction and resume.

## **When Duty Calls - Mentoring**

Once you have been approached by a practice, it will be up to you and the veterinarian to establish a starting date, an ending date, and work hours. Although veterinary practice can have very unpredictable hours and emergencies, you should not be scheduled to work more than 40-45 hours per week. In the event of emergencies, staff shortages, or unforeseen events, being flexible and supportive can go a long way toward strengthening your relationship with the practice and increasing your knowledge and enriching your mentorship experience. That late case may also be the only dog in diabetic ketoacidosis that you work with before you are a practicing veterinarian on your own.

Keep in mind that the quality of your experience is directly proportional to your level of interest, enthusiasm and preparation. You will be expected to use your books, notes and VIN (Veterinary Information Network) to research topics relevant to your cases on a daily basis. Don't hesitate to ask questions, but be respectful of your doctor's time by learning as much as possible on your own.

For health patients, learn to answer common client questions regarding topics such as vaccinations, parasite control, and husbandry. As a practicing veterinarian, this is where you will spend the bulk of your time, and these communications will be your most important asset!

For ill patients, begin making lists of differential diagnoses. While nobody expects you to come up with accurate lists of specific diseases, at this stage you should be able to recognize general disease processes such as inflammation, infection, metabolic derangements, endocrinopathies, etc.

Make an attempt to interpret labwork and radiographs as well. You will learn just as much from being incorrect as being correct; even seasoned veterinarians have been known to be wrong before. If you know that a surgery or other procedure is scheduled for later in the day or week, spending a few minutes researching common techniques will help you to glean more from watching, and keeps you prepared should you be asked to assist the veterinarian.

Remember that your mentor likely will be seeing fewer cases and at a slower rate in order to provide you with this opportunity. When the practice is busy you will need to step forward and play the part of the assistant (check in rooms, restrain animals, clean cages, and help wherever you can). Use slow times to ask lots of questions, research cases, and practice the skills on your task list. Also remember that technicians may be better than a veterinarian at demonstrating a reliable jugular venipuncture.

Bear in mind that when you entered veterinary school you ceased to be a student and became a veterinary colleague; you are part of the profession. Please arrive at work early and dress in the same manner as the owner of the practice. Generally, this means slacks or a conservative skirt with a sweater or button-up top, but may range from coveralls to dress shirts and ties, depending on the practice. When in doubt, wear something nicer, and remember that you are a doctor-to-be and not a student.

Also, please conduct yourself with professionalism both inside and outside of the practice. This includes treating every member of the practice healthcare team with respect, regardless of the nature of their job. There is much to be learned from technicians, assistants and receptionists -- they will be a huge influence on your ability to learn this summer.

And remember to treat all clients as if they are a friend of your mother's and every patient as if it were your own animal. Keep all records confidential and do not discuss case specifics outside of the practice.

Finally, if you are concerned about a situation within the practice, please do not hesitate to contact the OVMA office at (800) 235-3502 or the Dean's Office at (541) 737-2098. You should not feel compelled to participate in any activity with which you are not completely comfortable. All discussions will remain confidential!

### **In the Fall - A Report**

It is our hope that this program will help you to form a lasting relationship with your mentoring veterinarian. These doctors can be invaluable resources as you finish your education and begin looking for your first job, helping you to prepare for interviews and serving as personal references.

Veterinary medicine is a small profession and you will be surprised at how important it is to maintain these types of working relationships throughout your career. We will ask that you complete a brief survey so that we can continue to adjust the program to better suit your needs. The Mentorship Program is specifically designed for you, and your opinion is very important to us.

# Task List for Students

Following is a list of tasks for the Mentorship Program that we hope you will be able to accomplish. The list of goals have been geared toward your different stages in school. Please keep in mind that the “task list” is a strong recommendation but not an absolute; it is intended to provide you and your mentor with a framework for learning, and it can be adjusted and tailored as necessary to fit the particular practice and the needs and abilities of the student.

## **Veterinarians**

- Allow the student to follow one case daily (including entering exam room, reading diagnostic test results, discussing treatment options and follow-up plans)
- Hold rounds once weekly to discuss cases
- Allow the student to scrub in on and assist with at least one surgery (unless no surgeries are performed at the practice)
- Provide an opportunity for the student to complete the task list
- Provide some form of financial compensation (at least minimum wage)
- Read radiographs and blood work with the student, whenever possible
- Evaluate the student at the end of the program (evaluation form will be provided)
- Evaluate the program (your feedback is important to us)

## ***Strongly recommended***

Assign homework or paper cases once weekly (send student with copy of blood work and have student develop differential diagnoses, or assign student to research treatment options for a particular disease process - geared to student's level)

## **Students - between 1st and 2nd year**

- Take history from an owner
- Perform a physical examination
- Thoracic auscultation
- Abdominal palpation
- Auscultate a heart murmur
- Auscultate abnormal lung sounds
- Palpate a pregnant animal
- Otoscopic exam
- Rectal exam
- Wood's lamp exam
- Fluorescein eye stain
- Schirmer tear test
- Tonometry
- Listen as a veterinarian or technician discusses a cost estimate with the owner
- Develop a basic list of differential diagnoses
- Draw blood
- Process bloodwork using in-house testing equipment (if available)
- Catch urine, perform cystocentesis
- Prepare a urinalysis for analysis
- Prepare a fecal sample for analysis

- Take a radiograph (only if student is certified by the State of Oregon)
- Clean and wrap a surgical pack
- Place a soft padded bandage

**Students - between 2nd and 3rd years**

*All of the above, plus:*

- Place an IV catheter
- Intubate an animal (only if the student is a licensed technician in Oregon)
- Monitor anesthesia
- Measure blood pressure
- Read radiograph
- Perform a manual CBC
- Ear cytology
- Fecal exam
- Urinalysis
- Retinal exam
- Fine needle aspirate and cytology
- Perform a sterile scrub correctly
- Write a case in SOAP format
- Calculate a drug dose
- Calculate a fluid rate
- Discuss medication instructions with an owner (dosing, side effects)
- Discuss preventive health with an owner (vaccines, deworming, routine testing)

## **Veterinary Licensing Board Requirements**

1. All tasks are to be performed under direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian (the student and veterinarian must be on the premises at the same time).
2. Under **NO** circumstance can a student perform surgery. However, a student may assist a veterinarian with a procedure.
3. A student **CANNOT** administer a rabies vaccination, unless the student is currently licensed as a technician by the Oregon Veterinary Medical Examining Board.
4. A student **CANNOT** take a radiograph, unless the student has been certified by the State of Oregon or is a current licensed technician with the Oregon Veterinary Medical Examining Board.
5. Any veterinary practice that participates in the OVMA Mentorship Program **MUST** post a notice that informs clients that a student may be seeing a patient.