

AVFP-Association of Veterinary Family Practice

An Emerging Speciality-Do We really need it?

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The AVFP, founded in 2006, is dedicated to the study and promotion of the family practice model. The AVFP recognizes that there are special skills and knowledge required to provide effective veterinary primary care in a new era of human-animal interactions. The roles of companion animals are changing and will continue to do so.

- Most pet owners now consider their pets to be members of the family.
- Service animals provide indispensable assistance to humans with physical, psychological, and emotional disabilities.
- Animals are important in Search and Rescue and police work.
- They contribute positively to the development and education of children.
- They offer numerous health benefits to human members of the families in which they live.
- They provide comfort and company to elders, decreasing loneliness and increasing a sense of well-being.

In addition to proficiency in basic medical and surgical skills, the Veterinary Family Practitioner must also have special expertise in the following areas:

- Communication
- Community
- Clinical Competencies

In human medicine, the American Academy of Family Physicians was founded in 1947 to “to improve the health of [human] patients, families and communities by serving the needs of members with professionalism and creativity.” This gatekeeper model is now being used more and more to track and manage all parts of a patient’s care. This is the path that our profession needs to take at this time.

As the AVFP establishes a scientific basis for the study of family practice as an entity within veterinary medicine, we are working to achieve AVMA status as a board certified specialty.

Currently, AVFP areas of study include:

- Behavior
- End of life issues
- Grief counseling
- Nutritional management
- Life-stage management
- Wellness
- Holistic approaches
- Legal/ethical issues
- None of these topics are adequately covered in our veterinary school curricula.

The Association of Veterinary Family Practitioners (AVFP) focuses on these areas by emphasizing communication and community involvement. AVFP seeks to “optimize the quality of life of pets in human families and communities by advancing the essential role of primary veterinary care.”