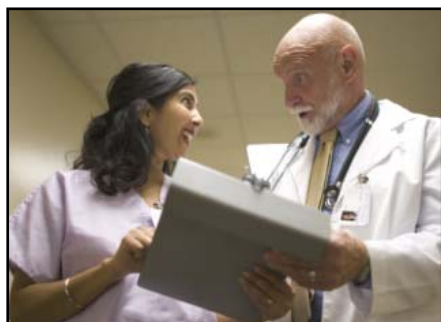


Welcoming a New Doctor

How to Integrate a New Graduate or Associate Into Your Practice

By Wendy S. Myers, Communication Solutions for Veterinarians Inc., and Jennifer C. Olson, veterinary student at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine



You're a new graduate, anxious to start a job where for the first time people will call you "Doctor." Years of studying and sleepless nights are finally over, or are they? Successfully integrating a new graduate or associate veterinarian into your practice can be equally stressful for the practice owner and employee. Get off to a great start with this advice from a leading consultant and veterinary

student who will soon be the new doctor.

Place "Welcome Our New Doctor" signs on the reception counter and bulletin boards. Include a picture and brief bio on signs. Post announcements the month before your associate arrives to help acquaint clients.

Profile the new doctor on your hospital website. Feature your associate on the homepage for the first few months as well as in the "Meet Our Staff" section. The doctor's bio should list degrees, areas of special interest, pets, hobbies and perhaps a story about why he or she decided to become a veterinarian. Personal touches help clients bond with a new doctor.

Have business cards printed before the new doctor's arrival. Imagine the pride your associate veterinarian will feel when he or she can hand clients a business card on the first day of work. Display business cards on the reception counter and in exam rooms. The new doctor also should keep business cards in a lab coat pocket and give a card to every client he or she meets.

Provide a lab coat embroidered with the doctor's name and clinic logo. First impressions matter. Having your logo on the lab coat makes your new doctor feel part of your medical team.

Send a news release and photograph to local media. Many newspapers publish a "people in the news" column in the business section. Contact lifestyles or features editors who cover pets about a possible article. Send the news release at least two weeks prior to

publication. Another option is to place a display advertisement with a “Welcome Our New Veterinarian” message. Don’t overlook magazines, TV and radio stations.

Describe your hospital protocols and drug inventory. Protocols explain your medical philosophies in areas such as core and non-core vaccines, preanesthetic testing, heartworm testing and prevention for dogs and cats, intestinal parasite screening, pain management, euthanasia and more. Your associate can study protocols at home to get acquainted with your standards of care before stepping through the door as an employee. Also let your new doctor know which drugs you stock in your pharmacy. Go over commonly prescribed antibiotics, NSAIDs, steroids, preventatives and pain drugs. Review blood monitoring protocols for long-term prescriptions that treat conditions such as seizures, arthritis, heart disease, allergies, hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism.

Host a “meet and greet” social event with your veterinary team. Choose a nice restaurant for a reception or dinner. This social occasion lets the team get to know your associate before the first day of work. Awkward introductions on the first day will quickly be replaced with welcoming smiles because folks already know each other.



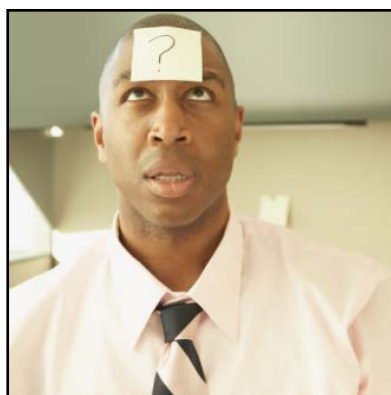
Make the first day special. Place a bouquet on the reception counter with a welcome card. When the new associate arrives, the practice owner should give the doctor a tour of the hospital, stopping to introduce team members and explain their roles. Make sure staff members wear nametags because your new doctor will have a lot of names to learn. The practice owner should treat the doctor to lunch the first day. Prioritize your appointment and surgery schedule so a lunch break happens rather than having the new associate work through lunch and have a growling stomach during afternoon exams.

Have your new associate shadow a senior doctor for several days. Then the new veterinarian can learn your protocols and exam flow. Make personal introductions to clients such as, “I’d like you to meet Dr. Jennifer Olson. She’s just joined our hospital staff and brings expertise in feline medicine and surgery. Dr. Olson earned her doctorate in veterinary medicine from Cornell University this spring. We know you and your pets will enjoy getting to know her.”

Provide training on your veterinary software. Show the new doctor how to access client records, create estimates, view the appointment and surgery schedule, and enter charges and prescriptions. Review the travel sheet and frequently used computer codes.

Explain recordkeeping formats and preferences. Let your associate know how much detail is appropriate for medical records. Discuss documenting client conversations and common abbreviations. Review the order of forms in records such as client information sheet, master problem list, progress notes, lab results and consent forms. Encourage associates to finish each record before moving onto the next appointment so information is accurate and complete. Then a stack of records won't stress your new employee at the end of the day. Prompt recordkeeping is a great habit to establish early in a doctor's career.

Phase the new doctor into the appointment schedule. You may have worked 16-hour days, been on call for after-hours emergencies and expected to handle the same caseload as the practice owner when you first became a veterinarian. Expectations of today's graduates are dramatically different. A transition period can help your associate integrate smoothly into your practice. If you schedule 20 minutes for wellness exams, consider giving a new graduate 30-minute appointments. This allows extra time to establish client relationships and become familiar with the flow of appointments.



Avoid the scavenger hunt for equipment and supplies. “Where’s the otoscope?” the new doctor asks, leaving a client waiting in the exam room. Don’t send the new doctor on a wild goose chase looking for commonly used equipment and medical supplies. As part of orientation, have a technician show the new doctor where items are kept and who to ask about reordering when supplies get low.

Seek opinions and knowledge from your associate. Your new graduate just spent years learning the latest in veterinary medicine. Discuss cases, seek second opinions from one another and exchange your knowledge. Your practice and patients will be better for it. Respect and confidence can help cement your collegial relationship.

For over-the-top initiations, consider special events such as:

Host a reception for your new associate with top clients. This lets the new doctor establish personal relationships with VIP clients. When these clients visit next, they can offer a friendly hello or even request an appointment with the new doctor.

Introduce your doctor to colleagues at the next local or state veterinary medical



association meeting. Invite your associate to join you for continuing-education events. During registration or before the lecture starts, introduce your new doctor to colleagues. Spend extra time talking with emergency and specialty doctors, especially those whom you have a referral relationship with. Also consider other business organization meetings such as the chamber of commerce, Rotary Club and groups the practice owner belongs to.

When you integrate a new doctor with these welcoming strategies, you'll build the foundation for a strong, lasting relationship. The "baptism by fire" approach of orientating a new doctor only leaves the practice burned. Practice the Golden Rule and treat your new associate as you would have wanted to be treated on your first day as a veterinarian. Years of loyalty from your associate veterinarian will be your reward.

Special Thanks to Our Co-Author:



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About the Author:



Wendy S. Myers owns Communication Solutions for Veterinarians in Denver. Her consulting firm helps teams improve compliance, client service and practice management. Communication Solutions for Veterinarians has provided mystery phone shopper training to more than 2,600 receptionists nationwide. Wendy is a partner in Animal Hospital Specialty Center, a 13-doctor AAHA-accredited referral practice offering internal medicine, surgery, neurology, oncology, specialty dentistry, and emergency care in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. She is the author of four books and five videos. Subscribe to Communication Solutions for Veterinarians' e-newsletter on our website at: www.csvets.com. E-mail Wendy at: wmyers@csvets.com.