



MISSION STATEMENT

To improve the economic base of the veterinary profession, ensuring that the delivery of veterinary care and service meets the needs of society.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. James E. Nave, *Chair*

Dr. Lonnie J. King, *Vice Chair*

Dr. Michael A. Paul,
Secretary/Treasurer

Dr. John W. Albers

Dr. Jane E. Brunt

Dr. J. Randall Bush

Dr. Daryl D. Buss

Dr. Lester M. Crawford

Dr. Bruce W. Little

Dr.Carolynn T. MacAllister

Dr. Sheila M. McGuirk

Dr. Margaret J. Rucker

Mr. Howard E. Rubin,
Chief Executive Officer

Introducing the NCVEI Web site

Howard E. Rubin

The National Commission on Veterinary Economic Issues (NCVEI) has launched its interactive Web site, www.NCVEI.org. Members of the veterinary profession can now access current information on the NCVEI by connecting to the site from any computer with an Internet connection. The AVMA, AAHA, and AAVMC will also be providing direct links from their Web sites to www.NCVEI.org.

Phase One

Having witnessed unsuccessful passive approaches to solving the economic woes of the veterinary profession, the NCVEI is taking an interactive approach. The first step in that direction is phase one of the NCVEI Web site. This initial phase will give users the opportunity to familiarize themselves with all aspects of the commission's work. Under the headings, Where did we come from? Where are we now? Where are we going? and Where should we go? viewers will find information about NCVEI activities and the people involved.

One of the goals in developing the first and future phases of the Web site was to make the site not only beneficial to members of the profession, but also user-friendly, easy to navigate, and fun to use. The intention was to create a Web site unique in the veterinary profession. We added a touch of humor to our home page to let members of the profession know that the NCVEI hopes to be cre-

ative and different, not only with the design of the Web site, but with its approach to the economic concerns of the profession as well.

Users of www.NCVEI.org are encouraged to register their name and e-mail address on the Web site. Registered guests will be sent periodic updates of NCVEI activities via e-mail. A feedback page on the Web site gives users the opportunity to make comments and recommendations to NCVEI staff.

Phase Two

Scheduled for introduction at the end of 2001, phase two will include analytical tools for addressing the issues that impact veterinarians' income. Interactive models will assist veterinarians in pricing, benchmarking, and staff retention.

Analytical pricing model—In laying the framework for the pricing model, the Pricing Strategies Work Group noted the following:

- Veterinarians often undervalue their offerings
- Veterinarians perceive that clients will not pay full value for services received
- Veterinarians anticipate what a client can or will pay
- The fees of other medical service providers (physicians and dentists) are set by third parties, including insurance companies and the government
- Veterinarians do not respond to passive arguments to change behavior

From these assumptions, the work group outlined four modules: price comparison, cost comparison, service mix, and value pricing.

The analytical pricing model will create a road map for veterinarians to travel from their existing pricing method to a modern, analytical model. Users will interact with the model by inputting data about their prices, costs, and product mix. The model will then provide instant numeric and graphic feedback.

Greenbrier & Russel, Inc, an e-business solutions provider, and the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association are assisting the NCVEI in development of their pricing model. Greenbrier & Russel, Inc will act as the project manager. They will be coordinating the efforts of veterinary experts who will create and validate the tools, marketing experts who will deliver the messaging and design of the tools, and technology experts who will build and implement the tools. With assistance, the NCVEI will create a successful pricing model.

Benchmarking to improve performance—Benchmarking was a critical activity identified by the Promoting Greater Efficiency in the Delivery System Work Group. A subcommittee of this work group was formed to concentrate on creating an effective busi-

ness tool that will allow veterinarians to compare themselves, their results, and their activities with those of similar practices.

Does it sound crazy that a leading medical center would study a leading hotel's guest registration process? No. These organizations use benchmarking to understand how to reach new levels of performance. The new NCVEI benchmarking system will provide immediate feedback to veterinarians on how their practices compare with others. The goal is to help veterinarians improve their performance by enabling them to see what is possible. Benchmarking users will be informed about economic competitiveness, sensitivity analysis (eg, if X changes, this is what will happen to Y), and market data evaluation.

Benchmarking answers the questions, How good are we? How good can we be? and most important, How do we get better? The trick is determining how superior performance levels are achieved. What do practices need to adopt to assist them in being as good as the best? The NCVEI benchmarking system will broaden the horizons of veterinarians by helping them realize there can be a better way. To be successful, veterinarians must rid themselves of notions that their prac-

tice and clients are so unique they don't lend themselves to innovations that other veterinarians have used to enhance their practices.

Retaining staff—Current data reveal a high rate of staff turnover at veterinary practices, but few clinic owners evaluate the full economic impact of a high turnover rate. Employers need to recognize the generational differences in the view of the workplace (live-to-work generation vs work-to-live generation). The NCVEI is creating a staff retention model to help practice owners quantify the impact of different work schedules and hours worked. This tool will help veterinarians meet the challenges posed by permanent and temporary part-time employees or providing family leave opportunities. Understanding how to attract and retain quality employees is financially and medically advantageous.

Through its Web site, the NCVEI hopes to work closely with, and obtain information from, veterinarians working in all segments of the profession. Every member of the profession will have a vested economic interest in the activities of NCVEI, but it will take a commitment from each individual to ensure that the goals of the NCVEI are achieved—so register now at the NCVEI Web site!