

Letters to the Editor

Diversity starts with us

I agree with the points raised by Dr. Mildred Montgomery Randolph in her recent letter to the editor on diversity in the veterinary profession.¹ Like her, I have pledged to encourage young people to pursue careers in science, especially veterinary medicine. When I arrived in the United States with a veterinary degree from Nigeria, I met a child who had told her mother she wanted to be a veterinarian, but her mother was concerned about this career choice because she was a minority. The mother said that meeting me changed her perception and gave her hope that her daughter could find a place in veterinary medicine.

There are many of us who have come to the United States with a veterinary degree and need encouragement and assistance while we pursue a license to practice. With this, we will also be encouraged to join the veterinary community, which in turn will aid in boosting the diversity and inclusion the AVMA is striving to promote.²

I also work in the laboratory animal field and have come across a quite diverse culture, although I have experienced, together with other minorities, the challenges posed by our identities, even in this research environment.¹ Working in a diverse culture has helped me to understand, respect, and value the experiences of people of diverse cultural backgrounds. The initiative created by Drs. Craig Franklin and Mike Fink, although small, is laudable and will help to dispel the image associated with veterinary medicine being the whitest profession in America.³ It all starts with us as individuals; we speak for our profession, and how we relate with others goes a long way in how people perceive our profession. Minority students must

be sought out to attend veterinary school to combat false perceptions that minority families do not own pets or that minority students are not able to withstand the rigorous academic training.⁴ All this comes down to personal perceptions and our willingness to overcome them.

I was told when I first arrived in the United States from Nigeria that I would never find a job working with animals in the United States. Many individuals with foreign veterinary degrees have ventured into other fields that are easier to break into, but some of us have decided to stay and encourage the younger generation coming behind us.

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1. Randolph MM. Diversity starts with us (lett). *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2017;251:777.
2. AVMA. Diversity and inclusion in veterinary medicine. Available at: www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Reference/diversity/Pages/default.aspx. Accessed Oct 28, 2017.
3. Thompson D. The 33 Whitest jobs in America. *The Atlantic* 2013;Nov 6. Available at: www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/11/the-33-whitest-jobs-in-america/281180/. Accessed Oct 24, 2017.
4. Rose PR. The blog: why veterinary medicine, the Whitest profession in America, needs black students. *Huff-*

Post. Available at: www.huffingtonpost.com/patti-r-rose/why-veterinary-medicine-t_b_8211558.html. Accessed Oct 28, 2017.

Heartworm incidence

In their letter¹ warning about a possible increase in heartworm incidence in the United States, Drs. Drake and Wiseman mention recent concerns that heartworms may be developing resistance to common preventative drugs. Mosquitoes are essential to the spread of heartworm. Thus, dogs that are not exposed to mosquitoes have no reason to be receiving heartworm preventatives, and veterinarians should never recommend a heartworm preventative without first asking about mosquito exposure. This is not an issue for much of the Southeast, but it is in the West, for example, where water sources and mosquitoes are not ubiquitous. Treat only when treatment is indicated. In our area, we see suburbanites moving into areas where there is risk of exposure when there is still none in older, nearby neighborhoods.

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1. Drake J, Wiseman S. Heartworm incidence appears to be increasing in the United States (lett). *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2017;251:1000-1001.

Instructions for Writing a Letter to the Editor

Readers are invited to submit letters to the editor. Letters may not exceed 500 words and 6 references. Letters to the Editor must be original and cannot have been published or submitted for publication elsewhere. Not all letters are published; all letters accepted for publication are subject to editing. Those pertaining to anything published in the *JAVMA* should be received within 1 month of the date of publication. Submission via email (JournalLetters@avma.org) or fax (847-925-9329) is encouraged; authors should give their full contact information, including address, daytime telephone number, fax number, and email address.

Letters containing defamatory, libelous, or malicious statements will not be published, nor will letters representing attacks on or attempts to demean veterinary societies or their committees or agencies. Viewpoints expressed in published letters are those of the letter writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions or policies of the AVMA.