

Why we need to advocate now for independent veterinary practices

The Independent Veterinary Practitioners Association was founded for a single reason: to help independent veterinary businesses thrive in an era of corporate consolidation.

By IVPA Board of Directors



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The theme of the 2020 Veterinary Meeting and Expo (VMX), one of the world's biggest veterinary conferences, was "where the veterinary community comes together." Yet the veterinary community increasingly seems to be neglecting the needs of independent veterinary practitioners. It's clear that the veterinary profession—and how veterinarians do business—is changing as clinics and hospitals are increasingly owned by corporations and national chains.¹

Those of us who prefer to remain small, locally owned businesses form unique connections with our clients, patients and other small businesses within our local communities, yet we also face unprecedented professional challenges, including corporate consolidation and industry infiltration of our professional organizations and associations, conferences and even veterinary schools.

The Independent Veterinary Practitioners Association (IVPA) was formed to promote the unique value that independent veterinarians deliver and to advocate for the interests and needs of these veterinarians.² We're the only association dedicated solely to this group.

The need for advocacy

Advocacy for independent veterinarians is essential because the needs of independent practices are very different than those of corporate practices or university teaching hospitals. Many of us small business owners wear several hats. In addition to practicing medicine, we must navigate health insurance, negotiate deals with vendors and troubleshoot staffing issues. Corporate practices, on the other hand, may have

teams of people in place to handle these types of management tasks. The IVPA offers a community in which independent practice owners and veterinarians can share ideas and empower each other to remain successfully independent.

We're also here to help each other promote the positive impact and value that independent veterinary practices can have within our communities. We believe that independently owned practices are better positioned to provide value to clients and patients than are large corporate chains. Successful small business owners are rarely motivated solely by money. Most small businesses lack the big media and marketing budgets of large, national chains. The IVPA strives to promote locally owned practices through creative social media campaigns, a searchable Find a Vet database of independent veterinary practices and branding products that allow consumers to easily identify us as locally owned businesses operated by their veterinarian.

Why the IVPA?

Less than two years old, the IVPA already is more than 450 members strong. This includes more than 330 independent practice owners. Yet we need to continue to grow our numbers to achieve our goal of advocating for the independent veterinarians within our profession.

One of our primary objectives is to become a member of the AVMA's Allied Caucus with a seat in the AVMA House of Delegates. To achieve this goal, we must double our membership numbers. The House of Delegates is the principal body within the profession responsible for establishing policy and providing direction

for matters related to veterinary medicine within the AVMA. The House of Delegates consists of AVMA members from 70 states and territories as well as members of allied veterinary medical groups, including the American Association of Industry Veterinarians, the American Association of Food Safety and Public Health Veterinarians and the American Animal Hospital Association.³ Securing membership in the Allied Caucus and a seat in the House of Delegates would ensure strong representation for the voice of independent veterinary practice owners and practitioners within the profession's primary decision-making body.

Join us

We believe it's vital for independent veterinarians to come together to share their experience and expertise, so that we may continue to thrive in an era of consolidation. Whether you're proudly independent or questioning your role, whether your business is successful or struggling, if you're a practice owner, associate or student who wants to know more, visit [iveterinarians.org/](#). Independently owned and operated veterinary practices contribute to the heartbeat of the local economy, and this business model must continue to be supported by the veterinary profession. [dvm360](#)

REFERENCES

1. Nolen RS. The corporatization of veterinary medicine. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2018;253:1365-1381.
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3. American Veterinary Medical Association. Organizations represented in the AVMA House of Delegates. AVMA website: [avma.org/about/bylaws/organizations-represented-avma-house-delegates](#). Accessed May 6, 2020.



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