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Diversity and Inclusion - What Can I Do?
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(she, her, hers)

Are you concerned (perhaps horrified?) about the recent spotlight on racial injustice and not sure what you should do? Do you believe in diversity and inclusion but fear taking a bold step forward? Then please read on! The purpose of this article is to provide context for some terms that may or may not be new to you and to provide a variety of ways that you can be part of the solution in creating a more diverse and inclusive world.

Allyship
There are many definitions of allyship including the following by Michelle Kim: "Allyship is an active and consistent practice of using power and privilege to achieve equity and inclusion while holding ourselves accountable to marginalized people's needs." I am a fierce ally for the marginalized. It's one of the reasons that as an ally that I was a member of the Pride Veterinary Medical Community (PrideVMC) long before I was invited to serve as their CEO. Some days I do good work towards the effort of being a strong ally, other days I fall short and know that I need to invest more time educating myself.

Personal Pronouns
Using correct personal pronouns is a way to show respect and create an inclusive environment, especially for those that identify as transgender. If you aren't sure how a person identifies in terms of their gender the advice used to be, "just ask". An even more inclusive approach is to offer up your pronouns with everyone you meet which creates an open environment for others to do the same. This can lead to questions which provide a wonderful opportunity to share and educate. With this approach we avoid incorrect assumptions, we avoid othering, and we create one more step towards a more inclusive, welcoming environment. What's "othering" you may be thinking? Othering is to treat or view a person or group of people as inferior to ourselves.

BIPOC
Have you seen BIPOC used more as of late? If so, good for you in being engaged with the conversation. BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous Person of Color. The mission of The BIPOC Project helps to explain why this acronym is important, "The BIPOC Project aims to build authentic and lasting solidarity among Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), in order to undo Native invisibility, anti-Blackness, dismantle white supremacy and advance racial justice".

Black Lives Matter vs All Lives Matter
Another current topic of discussion is why 'Black Lives Matter' is a powerful statement for change and why 'All Lives Matter' is not. Consider the following analogies shared by Donnovan Bennet. Imagine if you were at a gala raising money for breast cancer research and a group stormed into the event chanting 'all cancers matter'. Talking about breast cancer doesn't take away from the legitimate concern about

other cancers. Or imagine if while 'Boston Strong' was trending after the Boston marathon bombings in 2013 a bunch of people started tweeting that 'all cities are strong'. Both are examples that deliberately try to co-opt those conversations. This is how 'All Lives Matter' is received by people who understand and support the 'Black Lives Matter' movement.

What Can I Do?

There is so much weighing on us all - from the impacts of an ongoing pandemic, to the loss of loved ones, to horrifying acts that shine new light on pervasive racism. While we are trying to get by day to day and triage the most urgent matters, we must also carve out time to think about what we want our new normal to look like. What actions are we going to take that will help propel us into a new normal that includes more compassion, more collaboration, and more kindness? How will we leverage the benefits of diversity because it's the right thing to do, and because it's good business? I've asked this of many veterinary professionals over the last few months and these are some of the responses I've received.

- All practice members have committed to replacing "the girls" with "team members" or their names.
- We invited staff members to include relevant, helpful facts such as "I speak Spanish" or "I speak ASL" on their name badges.
- We allow staff members to utilize professional development funds to take a second language course.
- We are celebrating LGBTQ+ Pride Month in June by decorating the practice (including the curbside pickup area!) in Pride rainbow colors.
- We are inviting staff members to include their personal pronouns on their name badges.
- We encourage team members to include their pronouns by their name in their Zoom profile.
- We are creating a year-round build-up to Black History Month in February by highlighting black veterinary professionals on the practice social media channels.
- This fall we are planning for Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in May by gathering facts about influential Asian-Americans to post around the practice.
- We have started inviting staff members to select a topic of their choice to present at monthly staff meetings.
- We are starting each staff meeting with team members sharing one challenging and one positive thing that happened in the last 24 hours.
- We enrolled all team members in the AVMA Workplace Wellbeing program and created a place on our dry erase board to share key learnings as we progress through the modules.

And You?

Recently a UF CVM '99 classmate, Dr. Kemba Marshall, and I led an informal virtual session that we called "What Can I Do?". We focused the conversation around allyship, awareness, and advocacy and at the end of the session shared a google spreadsheet that contained a variety of resources that help answer the question "What can I do?" We continue to add to the spreadsheet and you can find it in the resource list below. So, what about you - is there an activity from the above list that you will recommend your practice or workplace engage in? Is there an article from the resource list below that you will read and share with your colleagues? Or perhaps reading this article sparked a creative idea that you were

already noodling on. Today is a good day to take one step towards being an even greater part of the solution and one step towards a more diverse, collaborative, and kind world.

Resources

Allyship (& Accomplice): The What, Why, and How
Explaining What ' All Lives Matters" Actually Means
Guide to Allyship
Pronouns Matter
The BIPOC Project
What Can I Do?

Article Note: The VBMA Alumni wanted to highlight ways to become more inclusive leaders in our practices and in the profession. We chose a great ally and advocate in our community, Dr. Mia Carey, to give insight on how we may be more inclusive in our practices. She is the CEO of her own consulting company, Cary Consulting and is the CEO of a group called Pride VMC. Pride VMC strives to promote acceptance, inclusivity, and leadership of veterinarians, veterinary technicians, veterinary medical students, of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender presentations. Our use of this article is not meant to be a political stance, but rather give food for thought to help us all create a more inclusive veterinary community.