

Building sustainable veterinary education and outreach programmes to strengthen international capacity and competency standards for veterinary paraprofessionals and professionals

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In a rapidly changing world, veterinary education must expand and adapt to meet societal demands in the fields of animal health, animal welfare, and veterinary public health. World Organisation for Animal Health Performance of Veterinary Services (OIE PVS) Evaluation reports have highlighted the need for improved veterinary education to support successful Veterinary Services. The most effective way to protect against ongoing global animal health threats is to build sustainable capacity by strengthening and fostering veterinary educational programmes.

The Institute for Infectious Animal Diseases (IIAD) is recognised as an OIE Collaborating Centre for biological threat reduction, and manages a portfolio that includes international veterinary education programmes that improve animal health worldwide through technical training and certification for veterinary paraprofessionals and professionals.

Many OIE Member Countries rely on veterinary paraprofessionals to perform routine surveillance, and laboratory duties, while also forming a crucial link between animal caretakers and veterinarians. Currently, IIAD administers the Veterinary Science Certificate Program (VSCP) to over 30,000 youth in the United States. This paraprofessional certification programme provides the training and skills needed for certified veterinary assistants in core areas of animal care, veterinary science, laboratory science, diagnostic processes, and public health.

IIAD has provided professional training in 15 nations globally related to laboratory, epidemiology, and surveillance measures. These are offered online or as in-country training programs. All IIAD programs are in synergistic alignment with international standards (i.e., OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code) and the PVS Pathway which is dedicated to the sustainable improvement of the quality of Veterinary Services in OIE Member Countries.

Pending availability of funding, the OIE and IIAD are exploring opportunities to develop standardised minimum competencies and minimum curricular requirements for veterinary para-professionals in alignment with the OIE intergovernmental standards, guidelines and recommendations.

Keywords: veterinary education – veterinary paraprofessionals – veterinary profession – training programme – certification programme – international capacity building