

REGISTERED VETERINARY TECHNOLOGISTS WHAT WE ARE AND WHY IT MATTERS – PART 2

BY AMBER GREGG, RVT

In our last column, we explored the Registered Veterinary Technologist (RVT) title and discussed why using the correct title is important for professional acknowledgement and public recognition. Now, I'll explore the difference between "technologist" and "technician".

An internet search of the two terms produces definitions that focus on specialization. A technician develops a set of skills focused on practical knowledge in an industry, such as theatre, or a type of technology, such as laboratory technology.

A technologist develops the same practical skills as a technician, and also learns the theoretical knowledge behind them. For example, a theatre technician would learn the skills to apply lighting as directed, and a theatre technologist would also learn the difference between electronic and digital lighting and why one might be better than the other in certain situations.

The way it was once explained to me is that a technician knows how, and a technologist knows why. While this makes sense, it doesn't explain why some provinces call their RVTs technicians and others call them technologists. A graduate of a program in BC becomes a technologist, and a graduate in Quebec becomes a technician, even though any CVMA-accredited veterinary technology program must meet the same standard.

According to Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC (ASTTBC), a Certified Technician is a graduate of an accredited one-year certificate program (or equivalent on-the-job training). An Applied Science Technologist is a graduate of an accredited two-year diploma program (or equivalent on-the-job training). Using this definition, the term "technologist" certainly applies to RVTs.

Some would simply state that students of animal health technology or veterinary technology programs are technologists. I think we can all agree that a professional title should not be decided based on a Google search or varied definitions of unofficial terms. Because, as discussed in Part 1 of this column, Registered Veterinary Technologist is the protected title for the profession in BC, it is the correct title by which to refer to a member of the BCVTA. Other terms used to describe an individual who performs tasks typically delegated to an RVT are misleading.

(On a related note, your valuable trained-on-the-job staff are allowed to use the term "veterinary technician." To refer to them as "registered," however, is inaccurate and may create misunderstanding for some individuals.)

BCVTA members are permitted to input their own title in the association database and many RVTs use "technician." I also see and hear "technician" in daily communications with RVTs, students, practice owners, and managers. I urge you, as veterinarians, mentors, and practice owners, to refer to your RVTs as "technologists," and I encourage RVTs to do the same when introducing themselves.

As we move toward regulation of RVTs, the BCVTA will continue to clarify the appropriate use of titles, why this is important, and how best to utilize the professionals in your practice to improve patient outcomes, build positive team culture, and provide long-lasting, meaningful care. [WCV](#)

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Amber Gregg, RVT, is the executive director and past president of the BCVTA. She graduated from the Thompson Rivers University veterinary technology program in 2007 and spent eight years in mixed animal practice before gaining experience in not-for-profit management. She joined the BCVTA board of directors as vice-president in 2020 and served a one-year term as president in 2021 before being appointed to the executive director position in 2022. Amber is grateful for everyone who made the BCVTA the strong and healthy organization it is today, and she is proud to work with the board of directors and members of the BCVTA to continue to advance the veterinary technology profession.