

This week, the most interesting procedure with which I assisted the doctor was a declawing surgery for a kitten. The owner of the kitten was concerned because she had a baby, and she thought the kitten could climb into its crib at night and might scratch the baby. During the surgery my job was to hold the kitten's arm upright while squeezing my hands to cut off the blood flow. The doctor first clamped each nail with a surgical instrument called a mosquito to stop the blood flow. Using a blade, he then cut/dug the entire nail out of the paw and finished by suturing the hole closed. Every so often the doctor would tell me to relax my grip to make sure that the cat's cuts were closed properly and no blood leaked out. After declawing both front paws, the doctor wrapped each paw in a layer of gauze and vet wrap to ensure that the kitten would not chew out the sutures.

While many people may argue that a procedure such as declawing is cruel, there may be appropriate reason for wanting to do it, such as a child's safety. The doctor makes a distinction between needless procedures and those which have an important purpose. He is a minimalist and likes to give his clients choices when it comes to decisions in diagnostic tests and treatments. Watching him interact with clients has taught me the importance of being able to explain complex medical issues at the level of an average person. I see how he talks to clients - explaining everything he does as he examines an animal, knowing when to tell a client to listen, and being able to explain something in more than one way.

While it is definitely not the easiest, cleanest, or most predictable job, working at the veterinary clinic is reaffirming my passion for veterinary medicine. I am learning a lot by setting goals for myself and also by interacting with the doctor and my coworkers. The doctor is a great mentor because he has a lot of experience and is able to guide students. I like that the doctor challenges me to take the initiative to learn new things. Sometimes he will leave a veterinary medical journal on the counter or will tell me to look up a certain topic when I have questions or will show me a patient's history and ask what I think of it. I feel that I am learning to think more like a veterinarian by taking what I have learned and applying it to what an owner has observed. Being in the medical field implies constant learning because information keeps changing and new products are always being produced. I have come to understand how important it is to keep up-to-date with the latest information, whether it be new drugs, new studies, or news stories involving animals (such as food recalls or common misconceptions). While I know that I still have a long way to go, I feel that working with the doctor is improving my critical thinking skills. I now find myself asking more questions when I want to know more about the reason that the doctor suggested something for a patient or when I do not understand a concept or procedure. Other skills that I still need to improve are efficiency in doing dentals, and social and interpersonal interactions.