Celebrate AAPI Awareness Month

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May is Asian American Pacific Islander awareness month. Although I was born in the United States, my parents instilled much of my Korean culture in me. My parents had an arranged marriage, and they immigrated here in the mid-1960s. We were the third Asian family to live in the town I grew up in.

I am not your typical veterinarian because I did not grow up with pets. However, I fell in love with the cats my piano teachers had, and I loved the dogs that lived in our neighborhood. My identical twin loves cats, but apparently, she has a different memory of the dogs; they were not the nicest, according to her. It was not until my senior year of college at UPenn that I considered veterinary medicine when my friend said, ‘you should be a vet.’ She then helped me to get a volunteer position at VHUP, and my veterinary journey began.

The AAPI community represents ~2% of veterinarians, according to the AVMA. This is surprising to many outside the community as Asians have a far higher number in human medicine. Some of this is cultural, though times are changing. When I was in veterinary school at a predominantly Korean church, only myself and our Caucasian pastor had pets with a membership of over 200. Now I see more in the AAPI community with pets, including my extended family.

Please support the AAPI colleagues you have. Microaggressions or flat-out racism happen at a higher rate than you would believe. Most of these interactions are not malicious but just simply a lack of knowledge. I challenge anyone reading this to talk to those around you about their cultures. We are stronger when we understand each other better.