Students Make a Difference

The word student denotes someone who is in the process of learning and developing skills and knowledge. The Veterinary Medical Center is the classroom for fourth-year veterinary students, and it provides an experiential learning environment and opportunity, a place to apply clinical knowledge learned during the prior three years in academic classrooms and laboratories. In addition to being a clinical laboratory, it is a place to practice and refine skills in communication, business acumen, time management, and interpersonal interactions.

There are defined and important roles for students in the Veterinary Medical Center. They are responsible for greeting clients in the waiting area and gathering a complete medical history for each patient, performing the initial physical examination and participating as part of the healthcare team in thoroughly evaluating the patient, providing telephone updates to clients who have a hospitalized patient, making arrangements and being available during visits by clients who have a hospitalized animal, preparing the first draft of the patient discharge summary, and other important roles that facilitate patient management, client care, and communication. Do clinicians grade the students’ work? Yes, students are evaluated on each rotation by our faculty and staff with regard to a number of criteria important for assessing clinical performance.

Clients are also “grading” our students through their feedback on the client satisfaction survey. Many students in the Class of 2011 were mentioned by name on these client surveys or in other correspondence for providing “exceptionally good care.” One client noted that a student, Katie, went above and beyond by delivering their dog’s e-collar to their home because they had left it at the hospital. A few of the attributes that clients appreciate and mention about our students include caring, kindness, compassion, courtesy, attentiveness, and being informative. One respondent wrote, “Lindsey was caring and compassionate, helping my husband and me through a very difficult situation. Our beautiful cat developed a serious blood clot and we brought him in thinking he’d been hit or injured in some outside antics. She was our first responder and was so kind and helped us feel very comfortable and at ease. She took our cat back to be examined and returned to ask additional questions and explain to us that our cat had serious heart issues. This compassionate student helped us make a very tough decision to euthanize our pet. She provided us a calm, quiet environment to sit with our precious cat as long as we needed. When we were ready to say our last goodbye she returned and remained with us while our cat went away…”

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In this July-August issue of “Update for Veterinarians,” we are offering you a glimpse of student life and participation in their clinical experience. For some of you, this may be a trip down “memory lane.” Some of the changes may offer you insights into our efforts to continue to provide an excellent educational experience for our students. Starting with the incoming class this autumn—the class of 2015—we will welcome 182 veterinary students to campus.

My experience prior to coming to the Veterinary Medical Center was in human medicine, and I have been asked by several people to discuss the big differences. What I am observing is that there are far more similarities than differences. Like children, pets are brought in to the VMC by concerned “parents” who can describe behavior changes that indicate illness. Caring doctors and technicians know the people who love them.

We also are constantly striving to improve our services to our clients, and to our referring veterinarians. This newsletter is just one way we connect with you to inform you of changes and updates at the VMC. I hope you will also call, email, fax, write or stop by to let us know how we can improve our service to you and to your clients. I look forward to meeting you.

Karin Zuckerman

From the Director

I have been at the Veterinary Medical Center for just over two months and am constantly reminded of the old saying: You learn something new every day! I am certainly enjoying meeting clients, as well as getting to know our faculty, technicians, and staff, and learning about the important contributions offered by our students.

Within my first few weeks here, I was impressed by this Annual Open House. I understand that the event expanded significantly this year, with a new focus on welcoming families and including special activities for children. The second-year students who organized talks, tours, animals, displays, and food vendors created a festive atmosphere and easily welcomed nearly 3,000 guests to our campus. What a wonderful community event!

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The White Coat Ceremony celebrates student learning

Oath and Hooding

The tradition of Oath and Hooding is one of the most honored in the College of Veterinary Medicine. On Saturday, June 11, 139 new veterinarians entered their chosen field at the annual ceremony, held at Mershon Auditorium. Surrounded by friends and family, students will receive their scarlet and gray academic hood as a symbol of their degree. The hood is worn draped around the neck and over the shoulders, displayed down the back with the lining exposed, and is considered the most formal part of academic dress, which includes the more familiar cap and gown.

In addition to recognizing the most recent graduates, the College of Veterinary Medicine also recognize faculty award winners and Distinguished Alumni Award winners.

The three Distinguished Alumni Award winners include: Dr. Gary L. Cockerell, (PhD, 1976), Donald J. Meuten, (PhD 1981), and A. Simon Turner, (MS 1976).

The three faculty award winners include: Ronaldo C. da Costa, DMV, PhD, assistant professor of neurology and neurosurgery in the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, Wondwossen A. Gebreyes, DVM, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Veterinary Preventive Medicine, and Linda K. Lord, DVM, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Veterinary Preventive Medicine.

The newest tradition in the College of Veterinary Medicine is the "White Coat Ceremony," a formal event signifying the entry in to the clinical portion of the DVM program, during which students receive their white lab coats. The 2011 event was held at the Ohio Union. Dr. Lonnie King, dean, spoke at the event, and described it as "a rite of passage that leads into the final phase of the professional program. . . . The white coat is symbolic of the responsibility, privilege and duty commensurate with your life's work as a professional. Because you will be wearing this coat and are part of one of the country's elite clinical training programs, clients and patients will have immediate trust, respect, and confidence in you and also will have great expectations regarding your skills and abilities. The white coat also represents the learning, behavior, values and compassion that it has stood for through past decades and even centuries. You are now responsible to uphold the ethical and professional standards that go along with the art and science of veterinary medicine. The white coat will serve as a symbol that will indelibly imprint this important message and responsibility in your mind. . . . Also remember that your work beginning next week will be conducted as part of a team—a collection of white coats, if you will, and many great techs and other team members that collectively focus on the health and well being of our clients and patients. While we salute you individually today, remember that clinics are a team sport."

We all are reminded of the importance of our referring veterinarian as a crucial member of that team, and continue to appreciate the trust you place in us when you refer your clients to the Veterinary Medical Center.

Career Areas Of Emphasis

With the graduating class of 2012, senior students have the opportunity to select a "career area of emphasis" during their senior rotations. Previously, all fourth-year students were required to complete all rotations. Everyone did the same thing, and there was no opportunity for students to focus on any particular area of interest.

Curriculum committee members considered several different approaches to flexibility for senior rotations. In July, the Council of Education approved the new Career Areas of Emphasis curriculum for the clinical year. All seniors will be required to complete 26 weeks of major rotations that cover all major domestic species. These 13 rotations include anesthesia, pathology, radiology, food animal, equine, and small animal experiences. In addition to these core experiences, students have 14 to 16 weeks of rotations during which they can explore one of five career areas of emphasis: small animal, equine, food animal, mixed animal, and individualized. The individualized career area of emphasis is designed to accommodate students with specialized areas of interest such as biomedical research, pathology, laboratory animal medicine, zoo and wildlife medicine, avian and exotic animal medicine, regulatory medicine, and public health.

Our students will continue to be well-prepared for general veterinary practice with the 26 weeks of core requirements. The opportunity to specialize will allow these young adults to take responsibility and ownership for the career choices they make. In addition, this flexibility will serve them well in the career they choose.

The greatest changes will be for the clinical faculty in the Veterinary Medical Center. Student choice may change the numbers of students in some rotations, and we may need to reassess how some clinical services are managed.

Assessing Clinical Competencies

Another new requirement for current students is an effort to assess "clinical competencies." The AVMA Council on Education (responsible for accreditation of veterinary colleges) now requires colleges of veterinary medicine to look at methods of assessing the ability of students to apply their knowledge to procedural tasks. This is becoming an issue for all health sciences colleges as consumers begin to ask questions about the competence of health care professionals: How do you know your health care professional is both qualified and competent? Is completing required course work enough?

Students completing their senior rotations are now required to ask technicians and clinicians to assess their abilities, and "sign off" on 340 different clinical competencies, including such things as appropriately restraining an animal and completing a blood draw efficiently.
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