Core dental skills in veterinary primary care education

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Teaching core dental skills in veterinary primary care education

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Periodontal disease is seen very frequently in general veterinary practice and is quoted as the most common non-infectious disease of companion animals (Harvey 1998). Historically, although innovative dental treatment is mentioned in textbooks dating from the early 20th century (Hobday 1906), the subject has received very little attention within European veterinary curricula. In the United Kingdom, no veterinary school has a residency training programme in dentistry. The lack of secondary referral status within UK veterinary schools means dentistry has low prestige compared to other clinical specialties, yet students themselves appreciate the need for solid skills in what is a key area of everyday practice, comprising substantial case load capable of revenue expansion in most general practices.

Within recent years, veterinary educationalists have responded to the need for more training in basic ‘day 1’ dentistry skills (Lumbis et al 2012). This poster summarises various strategies used to teach basic techniques with translation into the primary care clinical setting. These encompass low-, medium- and high-fidelity models for the clinical skills lab, and a new combined dental and ophthalmology selective clinical rotation operating away from the veterinary school teaching hospital. The low- and medium-fidelity models can also easily be used in the primary care clinic to provide ‘on the spot’ practice immediately prior to patient treatment.

**Didactic teaching**

- Applied/clinical dental anatomy in years 1, 2
- Clinical lectures (5) in third year & associated practicals (3)
- Collaboration with Edinburgh Dental Institute for intensive fourth-year classes in clinical skills lab setting (using human manikins) – 2 days
- Extraction ‘wet lab’ in final year – 3 hours

**Integration into primary care setting**

- Cases treated in the veterinary school’s own community practices as part of their normal case load
- New combined dental/ophthalmology selective rotation at People’s Dispensary for Sick Animals Pet Aid Hospital – high case-load; student-led assessment and treatment with veterinary school staff supervision (3 weeks)

**References**


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