

CPD the hard way: the Canadian Rockies

ICY snow-melt instantly flooded my running shoe as it sank deep within the treacherous bed of sphagnum moss with a sickening "squelch". Teetering precariously on the downward-sloping slab of rock, I ignored the cold, intent on resisting the seductive pull of gravity.

Beneath the slick, wet surface, the glacial melt waters tumbled by with an endless, powerful roar, before plunging sharply out of sight through shadowed corridors to destinations unknown.

Descending 100 feet from the safety of the forest trail down steep, rocky scree, to the very base of the canyon, had seemed like a great idea at the time. The photo, I was sure, would be worth the climb. My confidence, however, was fading fast. The photo was indeed stunning, but if my foot didn't stop sliding soon, it might well be my last.

"This has to be worth some serious CPD points," flashed inanely through my mind...

Humane teaching methods

I was ostensibly on my way to deliver three presentations at the 29th World Veterinary Congress in Vancouver in July when I recklessly strayed from the beaten path. My main presentation was to be on humane teaching methods within veterinary education.

Whilst a West Australian veterinary student from 1997 to 2001, I had been forced to wage a long and arduous struggle for humane teaching methods. This should never have been necessary, given that safeguarding animal welfare is theoretically fundamental to the profession. If humane alternatives exist, they should be used. And exist they do – in abundance!

In surgical courses, students ideally practise basic skills such as suturing and instrument handling, using knot-tying boards, plastic organs, and similar models. They then progress to simulated surgery on "ethically-sourced cadavers", obtained primarily from animals euthanased for medical reasons. Finally, students observe, assist with, and then perform

necessary surgery under close supervision on real patients that actually benefit from the surgery – similar to the training of physicians. In animal shelter sterilisation programmes, for example, homeless animals are neutered by students under supervision, and returned for adoption.

Preclinical disciplines such as physiology, biochemistry and anatomy may be taught using computer simulations, high-quality videos, ethically-sourced cadavers, preserved specimens, models and non-invasive self-experimentation.

Of 11 published studies of veterinary students comparing learning outcomes generated by non-harmful teaching methods with those achieved by harmful animal use, nine assessed surgical training – historically the discipline involving greatest harmful animal use.

Five of the 11 (45.5%) demonstrated superior learning outcomes using humane alternatives. Another 45.5% demonstrated equivalent learning outcomes, and only one study demonstrated inferior learning outcomes. Considerable time and cost savings were also evident.

Improving animal welfare standards

Oddly, however, many veterinary academics remain opposed to the introduction of humane teaching methods, which brings me to the topic of my remaining congress presentations: the need for improved animal welfare standards of veterinarians.

Although the public justifiably expects veterinarians to demonstrate leadership on animal welfare issues, disturbing surveys have demonstrated that the positions of veterinary associations sometimes lag behind the general public.

Potential solutions include the consideration of animal welfare awareness and critical reasoning ability during veterinary student selection; inclusion of animal welfare, bioethics and critical reasoning training during veterinary undergraduate and continuing education; and the replacement of remaining harmful animal use in veterinary curricula with humane alternatives.

The responses to my presentations were heartening. Several speakers – including representatives of leading veterinary associations – acknowledged that proactive steps were necessary to restore the leadership and public credibility of the profession on animal welfare issues. Whether such rhetoric will translate into concrete action, however, remains to be seen.

One world, one health

The main theme of the congress was "One World, One Health". With zoonoses now comprising 60% of all human pathogens and 75% of emerging diseases, and their international spread increasingly facilitated by the intensification of animal agriculture, increased global trade and air travel, interspecies and national barriers to disease are increasingly porous.

Solutions will require increased co-operation between human and veterinary medicine, and national governments, and will require

increased biosecurity, disease surveillance, rapid responses to outbreaks, and appropriate vaccination protocols.

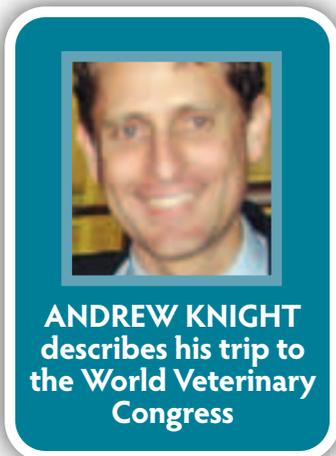
In search of adventure

Admittedly, however, the congress theme that inspired me most, was, "Come for the conference; stay for the adventure!" As a conscientious veterinarian, I took these instructions to heart. With only the vaguest idea of where I was going, I edged my hire-car out of Calgary airport on the "wrong" side of the road. Two hours later I was revelling in a majestic world of cloud-wreathed peaks and deep pine forests, deep within the Canadian Rockies.

I struggled to make distance on the world-famous Icefields Parkway between Banff and Jasper as jaw-dropping vistas brought me to a screeching halt at nearly every turn. Alpine mirror-lakes reflected snowy peaks dripping with glaciers that sparkled in the sunshine.

I embarked on two 20km hikes, ears flapping anxiously for the first sound of grizzly bears, given that I was not travelling in a "tightly-packed group of 10, making lots of noise and carrying bear spray" as warning signs urgently advised.

Apart from a single black bear cub, the bears were mysteriously absent. Possibly my unwashed running shoes were superior to spray. No matter. The marmots, pikas and butterflies revealed frolicking in alpine meadows after trekking across snow, ice and scree, around hidden lakes, beneath steep,



ANDREW KNIGHT
describes his trip to
the World Veterinary
Congress



In the Sentinel Pass and (below) a scene on the Sentinel Trail.



A section of the Athabasca glacier.



London-based veterinarian Andrew Knight is the president of Animals Count, a political party for people and animals (www.AnimalsCount.org).

Free courses at the AHT

THE Animal Health Trust in Newmarket has been running free monthly evening CPD courses on a wide range of subjects, from soft tissue surgery and oncology, to pain management in cats and canine alopecia. The courses are being run by the Trust's Small Animal and Equine Centres with lectures/seminars being provided by members of the AHT veterinary team. The courses are typically attracting between 40 and 60 delegates.

In June, Dr Andy Sparkes, head of the Centre for Small Animals, held an evening entitled *Limping towards a solution: management of osteoarthritis and chronic pain in cats*. Nearly all the delegates described the lecture as "excellent" and 98% gave it top marks in terms of how useful the content was.

On equine matters, Dr Rachel Murray, head of the equine unit, discussed *The role of MRI in the lameness examination* and clinician Shelley Down held a session on *Nerve blocks of the distal forelimb*.

The next equine session will be on 8th October when the Trust's head of anaesthesia, Elizabeth Leece, will discuss *Equine anaesthesia: tip to make life easier!*

Last month, dermatologist Natalie Perrins, gave a lecture entitled *Bald as an eagle: a practical approach to canine and feline alopecia*.

On 16th October, at 7.30pm, neurologist Alberta de Stefani will present a session on *Shivers and shakes: seizure management in small animal practice*.

Plans are underway for the 2009

schedule and the programme for next year will be published on the AHT website, www.aht.org.uk.

Skin cytology studies

DECHRA Veterinary Products is sponsoring a series of free evening CPD seminars on skin cytology and interpretation, being given by Liverpool's senior lecturer in veterinary dermatology, Dr Tim Nuttall.

He will use case studies to explain how skin cytology is a powerful tool for investigating clinical problems in the practice environment.

Dates and locations include: Ramada Hotel, Hatfield, on 7th October; Hilton Hotel, Swindon, on 9th October; Holiday Inn, Brighouse, Leeds, on 16th October; and Stirling Conference Centre, Stirling, on 23rd October. A buffet supper will be provided on arrival at 7.30pm.

To book a place call Rachel Horton on 01743 452847.

Bovine neosporosis symposium

BAYER Animal Health is to hold a technical symposium on bovine neosporosis, in Killarney on 12th November, the afternoon before the start of the BCVA congress, starting at 4pm.

Speakers will include Bayer's Dr Abdülkerim Deniz, who will discuss the control of coccidiosis using the single-dose coccidiocide Baycox Bovis; Keith Cutler, who will present a practitioner's

perspective on the disease; and Professor Dr Bruno Gottstein from the University of Bern in Switzerland, who will present a round-up of the current understanding on bovine neosporosis.

For places, call 01635 563000 or e-mail animal.health@bayerhealthcare.com.

Equine Ski-PD in January

CEVA Animal Health is to sponsor Equine Ski-PD 2009, which will combine a scientific meeting for equine veterinarians with skiing at Courmayeur in the Italian Alps.

The course, which runs from 14th-18th January covers equine internal medicine, surgery and dentistry. Dr Tim Brazil will investigate problem respiratory cases; John Keen will examine the investigation and management of equine metabolic diseases; Dr Richard Piercy will look at atypical myoglobinuria and other neuromuscular diseases; Henry Tremaine will explore the investigation and management of the complicated dental/sinus case; Bruce Bladon will cover the advances in the assessment and management of colic cases; Ellen Singer will investigate the problem hind limb lameness; and on the final day there will be a panel quiz and case-based workshop involving cases submitted by the panel and delegates.

For details or to book places, contact ben.mayes@equinevetpractice.co.uk or henry.tremaine@bristol.ac.uk.

A. vasorum meetings

BAYER Animal Health is to run a further series of free evening CPD meetings to update veterinary surgeons on *Angiostrongylus vasorum*.

The Glasgow meeting on 28th October will have presentations by Ian Ramsey and Jenny Helm of Glasgow University who will provide delegates with an overview of the impact of international travel and global warming on Scottish small animal practice, with information on imported diseases and the recent *A. vasorum* case in Scotland.

In Cambridge on 4th November, Derby on 5th November and Manchester on 6th November, Sheila Brennan of University College Dublin and Jakob Willesen of the University of Copenhagen will present on the epidemiologic, diagnostic, therapeutic

and clinical aspects of canine angiostrongylosis.

The meetings will commence with a buffet dinner at 7pm, followed by lectures from 8-10pm. Places can be reserved by calling Bayer on 01635 563682.

Graduate symposium

A CPD graduate symposium, designed to provide practical surgical and management advice and solutions for those embarking on their professional careers, is to be held at Lusty Glaze beach adventure and lecture centre in Newquay, Cornwall, from Friday 10th to Sunday 12th October.

ProStart course director Colin Whiting, says the aim is to fast-track new graduates by sharing experience and helping them through that tricky first year in practice. However whilst the course has a total of 11 hours CPD, it also has a packed fun and social element including zip wire and surf lessons!"

Sponsored by Merial Animal Health, the inaugural ProStart CPD graduate symposium includes lectures and workshops covering aspects of small animal practice including practice economics, consultation skills, surgical guides for neutering, maximising therapeutic opportunities, and client and staff interactions – with tips from a head nurse.

The course, including accommodation, costs £240 (plus VAT),

To book a place, contact Beverley Archer on beverly.archer@merial.com.

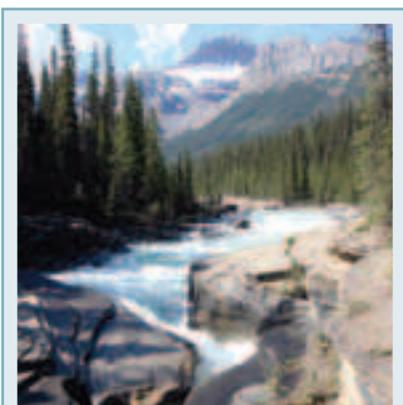
Thinking of starting a practice?

SPVS is holding a seminar on 19th November at the Aztec Hotel in Bristol for people interested in setting up their own practices.

The event, to be presented by Hazlewoods LLP, will cover areas such as benchmarking, understanding financial information, practice valuation, liability partnerships and tax.

Delegates will also be guided through the steps they would need to take when buying into an established veterinary business.

Costs for the course are £150 (plus VAT) for the first delegate and £130 (plus VAT) for a second delegate from the same practice. For details contact the SPVS secretariat on 01926 410454 or e-mail office@spvs.org.uk.



The Mistaya canyon.

jagged peaks, from which glittering waterfalls tumbled, more than convinced me I was in one of the world's most breathtakingly beautiful places.

Threatened wilderness

The degradation of such pristine wilderness due to global warming – as evidenced by alarmingly receding glaciers – must prompt some serious soul-searching by veterinarians and others.

Our profession is intimately

involved in the maintenance of intensive animal agricultural systems which are known to contribute substantially to water and environmental contamination, not to mention bacterial antibiotic resistance.

According to a 2007 United Nations Food & Agriculture Organisation report, *Livestock's Long Shadow*, animal agriculture currently contributes 18% of all greenhouse gases – more than the entire transport sector combined!

Tinkering at the edges by marginally increasing production efficiency, as sought by some researchers, is hardly likely to avert the environmental disaster toward which we appear to be rapidly heading. A considerably more honest assessment of the true costs and benefits of intensive animal production is clearly required if we wish to continue to have the option of risking our lives in places of breathtaking, glacial beauty, in the company of amazing alpine creatures, whilst ostensibly in pursuit of our CPD.

■ **Test your knowledge** – veterinary surgeons and practice staff can test their NSAID knowledge on the website www.osteoarthritisindogs.co.uk and get the chance to win a £50 book voucher. The site, run by Merial Animal Health, is designed to help practice staff understand more about canine osteoarthritis and effective management of the condition. The test consists of 10 multi-choice questions and results are returned within a matter of a few seconds.