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Strengthening Interprofessional Relations

C. B. Hostetler, D.V.M.

I believe all of us will agree that there is a need for strengthened interprofessional relations to increase the exchange of professional information for a number of reasons. Some of these are to broaden our scope of scientific information and to help us better serve our communities.

The basis on which good relations with the other healing arts professions depends, must include contacts with them through individual members in the community, through local organizations, through state organizations and through national organizations.

In many instances veterinarians have developed excellent relationships in their communities through personal contact; but in most cases no effort has been exerted to try to bring about meetings in the communities, or the states for that matter, with representatives from the different healing arts professions participating.

We in veterinary medicine should be active in stimulating these meetings and also interprofessional organizations because as a profession directly and indirectly related to the other healing arts professions, veterinary medicine quite often is a key group to bring about professional harmony and sociability. Veterinary medicine can readily approach the other professions regarding the establishment of interprofessional associations and through the veterinarian's excellent training in all phases of health sciences, he can discuss scientific information with any medical or allied professional group and thus stimulate better relations with other professions.

Here is an outline of things that might be followed in forming a state interprofessional organization or council. This outline could be changed to meet either local or national needs:

a. Find out if each of the health professions have an interprofessional committee. If not, why not.
b. Have the council representative be members of each state association's interprofessional committee.
c. Make membership on the council by state association, with four or five

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representatives (we have five) from each profession that are empowered to speak for their entire association.

d. Each state association should pay equal annual dues to finance the council activities.

e. The council should have an executive board, preferably composed of the council's officers and the chairmen of each profession's interprofessional committee.

f. Officers should be set up so that each profession has one officer each year (in Illinois, officers move up each year, therefore assuring the presidency of the council to each of the professions in turn.)

g. Encourage membership in the council of men who have been very active in their own state and national associations.

In Illinois the above basic outline was urged in organizing the Illinois Interprofessional Council and here is the way the council was organized and is functioning to date:

Once a council has been established, it is important that each profession represented use it to the best advantage. Of course, the items brought before the council by each group will vary in nature and, to give some idea of veterinary medicine's participation, following is an outline of some of the topics pertaining to veterinary medicine that have been discussed or brought before the council:

1. Rabies — as you know a few years ago the Chicago area had a rabies outbreak. This was discussed by the council with pertinent information passed on to the various professional organizations, particularly medicine.

2. Sales of pharmaceuticals and biologicals directly to the laity — This has been discussed in open council, as well as individually, with the pharmaceutical representatives on the council. This naturally is a problem that will not be changed overnight, but in time much can be done to correct this situation. It might be added that the other professions on the council, excluding pharmacy, were not cognizant of the amount of lay sales of medications for animals.

3. State board examining committee — From time to time, each of the professions has experienced difficulty in having the best qualified men serve on the state examining committee. The interprofessional council has established a policy of supporting qualified men, submitted for approval by each profession.

   Illinois had a problem of a member of the Illinois veterinary medical examining committee that was not a member of either the American Veterinary Medical Association or the Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association. The interprofessional Council showed a very active interest in this problem and the situation has been corrected. Now all members of our veterinary examining committee are members, in good standing, of both the AVMA and the ISVMA.

4. Professional ethics — Each of the professions on the council submitted their code of ethics to the council for evaluation as an aid in strengthening professional activity. This has been valuable to all of the professions among their own members, as well as in the long run become a valuable aid to the high standards of professional services for the people of Illinois.

5. Legislative liaison — Each of the professions on the council maintain legislative contacts, however, by each profession keeping in close contact with each of the profession's legislative activity it has helped tremendously in the overall activity of each of our professions.

6. Interprofessional relations in local communities — We have found in Illinois that much good can come from the different professions knowing the local professional members of the other health professions on a professional and social basis. This has been encouraged and we have received a number of comments about this type of relationship, in that consultation and community health problems are much easier to deal with when there is harmony between the different professions.

7. Participation in panel discussions at state and national meetings — Each of the professions have been represented at state and national meetings at conventions of all the associations represented on the council. These panel discussions have (Continued on page 27)
Salmonella are submitted to typing centers. Until such time as a coordinated effort of this nature and scope is accomplished, the problem presented by the "orphan viruses" as well as by the newer viruses of pathogenic disease producing potential, will continue to grow.

Summary

It appears that the main challenge to the virologist today is not the conquest of viruses that produced the plagues of old as these viruses have long been recognized and measures developed against them. It appears that the day is gone when new pandemic-producing viruses are likely to make their appearance. The challenge is, instead, the elucidation of virus infections of an incipient nature — infections which are manifested possibly in many instances under the guise of complexes; infections in which multiple etiology, and the interplay of environmental, meteorological, and biological factors are all involved in a process which, in some cases rarely, and in others never, manifests itself as a clinical syndrome.

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highlighted the various activities of each profession and we in veterinary medicine feel that we have been able to disseminate much information on veterinary medicine to other health professions by this means.

8. Educational requirements and professional status — Educational requirements of each of the professions, to obtain their respective degrees, has been discussed at length by the council and the results of this discussion, as far as veterinary medicine has been concerned, have been very gratifying in that our professional status has been recognized and appreciated by the other professions.

Although our interprofessional relations in Illinois should be improved, we feel that through the interprofessional council, we have taken a big step in the right direction and it is encouraging to note that each of the professions is now placing more emphasis on their relations with the other professions.

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