1971

Curriculum Directors in Veterinary Medicine: Editorial

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Veterinary medicine is in an awkward position. Unlike human medicine, it is involved with a multitude of animal species. However, there is a need to determine what services the investing public demands. In other words, it is necessary to emphasize those phases of veterinary medicine which serve the public most. Once determined, the curriculum of a veterinary medical college should be altered to meet these needs. Therefore, I am proposing a harmonious and blending change to meet the needs of the profession. The curriculum changes should be a continuous process without the interruption of years between changes.

Borrowing the idea from public school systems, positions of curriculum directors could be developed in colleges of veterinary medicine. The duties of a curriculum director would be multiple. The directors would keep abreast of the veterinary medical profession in all areas, determining the types of services needed and the relative demand of such services. They would study trends of job choices of recent graduates. With this study and its results, the directors would oversee and scrutinize the courses of the veterinary college curriculum. They would continuously help instructors modify existing and future courses in an effort to give the student the opportunity to prepare himself as best he could for the future needs of a veterinarian.

Here is an example of how the curriculum directors could help modify and coordinate courses. The directors would observe medicine and surgery courses. They would determine what are the most fundamental and salient anatomical features and structures in the study of surgery and medicine. They would then confer with the anatomists, telling them what appears to be the most important aspects to stress in their courses. This would be an effort to make anatomy as practical and clinical as possible, not merely academic.

Another example of their duties would be to limit course work and add course work as they deem essential to the program. If study and research concludes that more emphasis on management and nutrition is essential for large animal practice, the directors would then institute increased study of these areas at the expense of less important areas as determined through study and research.

A further example of their duties would be to examine the number of veterinarians in specific practices. If there is an abundance of opportunities in equine medicine and there is a greater number of students entering that practice, the directors should recommend emphasis on course work in equine medicine.

Where veterinary medicine is headed is a constant question. The public served by the profession determines this direction; those services which we can offer and are utilized by the public determine the nature of the profession. The more knowledgeable we are of a given discipline which the public needs, the more successful the profession will be. The more knowledgeable we are in a given discipline which the public does not need, the less successful the profession will be.

Specialization is inevitable in veterinary medicine; and, by use of curriculum directors now, the transition to specialization will be all the easier. The establishment of the positions of curriculum directors in colleges of veterinary medicine would indeed be valuable.

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