1993

Scavrna Teaching Award - Clinical Sciences 1993
Dr. Elizabeth Riedesel

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The recipient of the 1993 SCAVMA Teaching Award for Clinical Sciences was Dr. Elizabeth Riedesel, DVM. Currently, Dr. Riedesel is working for the College of Veterinary Medicine in three capacities: as an instructor and clinician within the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, the instructor for both the freshman and junior Radiology courses, and as the Interim Dept. Executive Officer of the Dept. of Clinical Sciences, and Interim Director of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

This spring (1993) was the first time that Dr. Riedesel had received the teaching award and she says that she was both "pleasantly surprised and very honored; it meant a lot to me", she said.

Dr. Riedesel received her DVM from Iowa State in 1975, and stayed on in the Teaching Hospital as an adjunct instructor in Radiology for three years. She then headed for California to complete a residency in Radiology at the Univ. of California, Davis. Upon completion of her residency, she returned to Iowa State as an assistant, and later an associate professor of Radiology in the teaching hospital.

In a field that many fail to fully master, how has she managed to be so successful? Dr. Riedesel says that her approach to radiology, and the approach which she teaches to her students, is to combine what one sees with what is known about the whole animal. "It looks magical", she says "but it's not". "To be successful you need to know anatomy, and how disease changes that anatomy, and physiology; as the function changes, the shape changes. You take clues from the radiograph, past history, and other diagnostic tests and come to some conclusions. Then, suggest a diagnosis."

When discussing teaching, Dr. Riedesel says she wants her students to feel comfortable to take chances and learn from mistakes now (while still in school). She says she presents concepts to her students and then challenges them to use those concepts to decipher radiographic images.

Though she does have a goal of incorporating more radiology into the earlier years of the veterinary curriculum (especially into Anatomy), she does not see gaining such technology as MRI and CT Scan as a vital goal of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital. The Radiology Dept. currently provides, radiography, fluroscopy, ultrasounds, and has the capability for nuclear medicine. For the other techniques, Dr. Riedesel points to the good relationship that the department maintains with Mary Greeley Hospital of Ames, for use of such equipment on a case-by-case basis.

Dr. Riedesel feels that continuing on for board certification was worth the work. Though she understands that most students enter veterinary school planning on becoming private practitioners, she feels that there are many opportunities for veterinarians, and would encourage more students to consider the possibility of specializing. It certainly seems to have worked very well for her.
The 1993 recipient of the SCAVMA Teaching Award for Basic Sciences was Dr. Tom Burkgren, D.V.M., M.B.A. Dr. Burkgren serves as an instructor of practice management at the College of Veterinary Medicine (ISU), as well as a business consultant for other practicing veterinarians and practitioner in his own swine practice.

Dr. Burkgren received his DVM in 1980 from the College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University. After graduation he was employed by Central Veterinary Service in Melbourne, IA as an associate veterinarian. He later opened his own practice in Gowrie, IA which developed into a two person partnership. Dr. Burkgren decided to further his education and attended Drake University in Des Moines, IA where he earned his MBA in 1989.

Of his professional career experiences, Dr. Burkgren says that his experience in teaching has been one of the most satisfying. His ultimate goal as a teacher is to, “help empower students to become successful veterinarians.” Because he is accountable for his students’ performance and always expects the best from them, he expects no less from himself. He feels that it is important for educators to realize that a students’ motivation to learn should transcend passing the next test and getting a good grade. In order to provide a high quality education, teachers should try to build a positive relationship with each student and a sense of community within the classroom.

When discussing teaching, Dr. Burkgren says his emphasis in the classroom is not to fill his students’ heads with unmanageable facts and figures, but to equip them with practical knowledge and enhance their individual talents. “I think of veterinary students as both the customers as well as the end-product of the educational process. Both students and faculty must have a feeling of ownership and responsibility for the learning process and its result. It is within this context that veterinary education can best prepare students for lifelong learning and the continued advancement of the profession.”

For Iowa State, Dr. Burkgren has been instrumental in designing and implementing a course in practice management offered to junior and senior veterinary students. He also consults with students on employment concerns including: interviews, compensation and contracts. His personal experiences, both in the field of business and veterinary practice, bring unique ideas and invaluable information to the students preparing for their own career.

The spring of 1993 was the first time Dr. Burkgren had received the teaching award and he would like to pass on a "thank you" to the students at Iowa State Veterinary College. "It was very gratifying to know that this award came from the students."

*Kristin Knipper is a second year student in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University.