

UCDVH conference review

A dedicated stream for nurses made a welcome reappearance to the UCD Veterinary Hospital Conference schedule, following last year's absence

The conference was attended by 90 nurses, with topics such as critical care and transfusion medicine and less familiar areas such as rehabilitation therapy being offered. Morning lectures were augmented for the first time ever by practical sessions in the afternoon, showcasing the facilities available at the hospital site.

Caroline Beckett RVN, who has worked within the Small Animal Clinical Services team for the last five years, and is regularly involved in blood transfusion services for hospital patients, was uniquely qualified to explain selection and collection techniques for blood donation. Her talk discussed the different blood types of cats and dogs, the various blood products and their storage limitations and the 'best practice' methods for blood collection from both large dogs, small dogs and cats.

Caroline explained that typing kits are cheap and widely available now. While we are all aware of the necessity of typing donor and recipient felines, we should also be typing canine patients, even if it is the first time they have received a transfusion. All blood bags should be clearly labelled and stored appropriately. A handy tip was to place an elastic band around the centre of the bag. This allows you to see if the contents have been partially defrosted due to a freezer malfunction or frequent freezer door opening, as the area under the band is thinner than the rest of the bag and is affected by thawing more easily. Once defrosted, blood should not be re-frozen.

After explaining the uses, collection methods and storage of different blood products, Caroline gave a guide to collecting blood from different size donors and recommendations for transfusion rates and amounts. She also discussed potential reaction symptoms. This informative lecture will have encouraged many nurses to attempt blood transfusion in practice.

Sinead Sheerin RVN, the hospital's specialist ICU nurse, gave a comprehensive talk on the nurse's role in the management of animals presenting in respiratory distress. After discussing the different symptoms and presentations of respiratory emergencies, Sinead gave advice on methods of evaluation, ways of providing oxygen therapy and hints on reducing stress to the patient, as stress is likely to exacerbate any dyspnoea.

Sinead explained in more detail the different origins of respiratory problems and their likely causes, covering upper



and lower airway distress, pleural space disease and thoracic wall abnormalities. Finally, treatments which nurses should be familiar with the preparation for, and assisting with, were discussed. These included tracheostomy and a method of closed system collection for fluid, for which video footage was used to demonstrate safe and sterile technique.

Maria Jose Gomez-Sanchez RVN Cert PT lectured on rehabilitation theory. Since joining the hospital nursing team, Maria has developed an interest in rehabilitation therapy. She has achieved a degree in human physical therapy and is currently studying for a certificate in equine rehabilitation therapy. Alongside another similarly qualified nurse, she runs the hospital Animal Rehabilitation Clinic (ARC) at UCD and treats a variety of animals both as in-patients and as referral appointments. In this lecture, she explained the



basics of rehabilitation of patients with spinal injuries. Initially we had some revision of anatomy and physiology, specifically on proprioceptors and classification of movements as, for example, 'voluntary' or 'reflex'. Maria emphasised the importance of thorough examination and prompt accurate diagnosis for a range of spinal injuries and presentations. Where surgical decompression is an option it should be carried out within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms to provide the best prognosis. She went on to explain the role of physical therapy in these patients and how different protocols need to be created for therapy, tailored to the specific case and the recovery phase the patient has reached. This lecture was a theoretical foundation for one of two, practical sessions with the Animal Rehabilitation Centre staff during the afternoon.

During the afternoon, the nurse delegates were split into several groups. Those who had registered early enough to participate in the practical sessions were divided into groups between physical therapy and clinical skills workshops, while other delegates were able to attend any of the lecture sessions on surgery, medicine, farm animal and business management topics.

Delegates were introduced to some UVH patients at the rehabilitation practicals. In one session, run by Maria, and assisted by Rocio Jimenez Rodrigues, Lexi, Baxter and Hunter were used to demonstrate different stages of recovery from spinal injury and the appropriate rehabilitation techniques which might be used on such cases. Case led, this session was very 'hands on' with delegates getting to observe and try flexor reflex and passive motion movements under supervision. Some of the rehabilitation aids and the theory behind their use were explained and demonstrated including 'peanuts' and a trampoline.

Hip dysplasia was the topic in the concurrent session, run by Lynn Cogan RVN Cert PT, with assistance from Aoife Kelly RVN. Lynn explained the examination process undertaken when deciding on the best course of therapy for such patients, which are the most common to attend the ARC. Usually, these cases are treated with a combination of drugs, diet and exercise modification but this session showed how patient specific physiotherapy treatments form a useful adjunct to conventional treatments. Lily and Floyd, two ARC regulars, helped to demonstrate examination and massage techniques and the use of a stability ball.

Delegates were granted full access to the clinical skills lab during the session there. The lab is organised and run by veterinary nurse, Maire O'Reilly, to allow students to practice common techniques safely and easily. The room is divided into multiple separate work stations and the nurses got the opportunity to try suturing; bandaging; gloving and gowning; an ocular exam; placement of a jugular cannulas in a horse and much more under the supervision of Maire and Aoife Joyce.