

# IVNA congress report

*The sixth annual Irish Veterinary Nursing Association congress was held in the Mullingar Park Hotel. Once again, this event was kindly sponsored by Royal Canin and Allianz, with a packed programme and social evening attracting around 100 delegates, writes IVNA vice-chairperson Lorraine McDonnell RVN*

## SATURDAY LECTURES AND COMMERCIAL EXHIBITION

Lectures on Saturday, May 23, covered multiple topics, including:

- Poisonings – the dos and don'ts;
- Behaviour in dogs and cats;
- The science and management of obesity cases;
- Employment law; and
- Advances in companion animal analgesia.

Fiona MacDermott MVB gave a comprehensive talk on 'Poisoning – the dos and don'ts', which included cases that gave delegates cause to think about their responses to clients in this type of emergency. Fiona reiterated that client communication is vital, and nurses should remain calm and obtain a full case history, as this will help to prepare for the patient's arrival. It was also highlighted that preparation is key, as having everything ready saves time. An inclusive guide was given from medications required, which toxins can be expelled using emesis and treatment after emesis. A list of toxins, clinical signs to watch out for, tools and techniques were provided. We got a whistle-stop tour of common toxicities from rodenticide toxicity, foods and human medications.

After a short tea break, Sarah Oxley BVSc MRCVS spoke about behaviour in dogs and cats. Sarah discussed socialisation, training, behaviour and how prevention was better than cure. If all these options failed, medication could be considered as an option; for example, pharmaceuticals, pheromones or supplements. We were guided through some case studies and their outcomes.

After our AGM and lunch break, delegates had a chance to stroll around the exhibitors' hall and meet sponsors offering a variety of information on new products. Some great competitions included prizes of a Kindle and various hampers. Then it was back to the next talk, where Louise Brennan spoke about the science and management of obesity cases. Louise discussed the difference between the overweight and the obese animal and classified obesity as a chronic incurable disease, and gave a review on body condition score. She highlighted that it was important to get the owner involved, as educating clients facilitates the owner to recognise the problem. Get prepared and start vet nurse consults to try to tackle this growing problem.

Christina Burke BA LLB BSc gave us a very comprehensive look at employment law contracts and what nurses are entitled to, from maternity cover to sick pay. She touched on certain sections of the Veterinary Practice Act and terms of employment legislation. She also answered questions asked by delegates in relation to workplace and employment contracts.



**Winner of the Veterinary Nurse of the Year award, Kirsten Cole (centre), pictured with Eilís Nichol, IVNA chairperson, and Damien Ivory, Royal Canin. Photo: Eithne O'Brien.**

Our final lecturer of the day, by Gráinne Lally MVB Cert VA, focused on advances in companion animal analgesia, where she reminded us that we should, where possible, always try to approach pain management in a pre-emptive and multimodal fashion. Grainne highlighted recent advances, from methadone to transdermal fentanyl spot-ons, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and adjunctive drugs. She also stated not to overlook non-pharmacological analgesia and not to mention the older drugs. At the end of this lecture some prizes were given out, including the anagram prize.

## SUNDAY PRACTICAL SESSIONS

This year we had two streams running concurrently, which included topics submitted on evaluation forms last year. Doireann Dowling RVN BA(Hons Mod Evn Sci) gave a small and large animal endoparasitology workshop, with seven stations set up. Each one covered a different aspect of parasitology, which included:

- Station 1 – small animal parasites, featuring a table of some of the most popular small animal parasites on the Irish market and explaining which product was for which patient;
- Station 2 – covered the large animal aspect of parasites, where the vet nurses play a crucial role in providing information to farmers;
- Station 3 – covered equine parasites and the importance of veterinary nurses being aware of the current recommendations, as worming has moved dramatically away from interval dosing to selective therapy;
- Station 4 – involved faecal egg count using the McMasters techniques, with simple instructions on

performing these very important tests, which are so easily done in practice;

- Station 5 – included faecal flotation solution and identifying small animal worm eggs; and
- Station 6 – focused on zoonosis, with a chart highlighting each zoonosis with source(s) and symptoms.

Following on from a tea break, Sinead Sheerin's talk, entitled 'CPR – Keep calm and save lives', provided an introduction to CPR monitoring. Demonstrating chest compression on 'Derek', the CPR dog, Sinead reviewed different methods used and how our observations are the most important tool! Team leaders are also important, as is care following a successful resuscitation.

Delegates got a chance to have hands-on experience and they got a chance to practise resuscitation on the CPR dogs as well as intubation, and everyone was given a chance to check their heart rates using the ECG. At each individual station, delegates could see and handle equipment used for intra-tracheal routes for emergency drugs, intra-osseous sites and IV access, as well as emergency tracheotomy equipment.

## SATURDAY NIGHT SOCIAL

After a challenging Saturday, it was time to relax and celebrate our nursing profession with the awards and social evening. A total of 96 delegates, committee members and sponsors gathered for the awards, dinner, music and dance. Sarah Fenlon, chairperson of Homes for Unwanted Greyhounds (HUG), which is the IVNA charity of the year 2015, explained to us what this charity does. HUG is comprised, like many charities, entirely of volunteers, all working together to improve the dire greyhound welfare issues in Ireland.

Their main aim is promoting the care and conditions in which many greyhounds in Ireland find themselves. They also hope to enhance their status as companion animals. They wish to work towards a time when no greyhounds in Ireland are destroyed for lack of a home or racing ability. Sarah informed us of a few cases she had been involved with and also how, for every greyhound HUG re-homes, another one is waiting to be taken in, which is very difficult with their limited available spaces. They are funded mainly through public donations and fundraise via street collections and, more recently, online auctions of donated goods.

With the help of HUG we raffled off the remainder of the raffle prizes. In total, €680 was raised from the day, and that goes straight to much-needed funds for HUG.

The main part of the evening was the awards ceremony.

There were numerous nominations in each category and a shortlist of six nominees from which the winners were chosen. Once again, our sponsor Royal Canin presented the Veterinary Nurse of the Year 2015, which went to Kirsten Cole from Cara Vet Group, who had received many nominations for her fantastic work.

Allianz presented the Student Nurse of the Year 2015 award, which went to a very deserving student, Majella McCafferty Carmody, from Dundalk IT.

Medray kindly sponsored the Support Staff of the Year 2015 award, which was presented to Helen Brennan from Sunbeam.

All three winners received an engraved crystal trophy and a hotel break voucher.

The response this year was fantastic in all categories. It is wonderful to see clients and colleagues alike appreciating and noticing that extra effort we put in, in order to help our patients and clients. We should be so proud in all that we achieve. Congratulations once again to all nominees.

Please check out the IVNA website ([www.ivna.ie](http://www.ivna.ie)) for nominations and pictures from the congress.

Following on from the AGM, Eilis Nichol has stepped down as chairperson but remains on the committee and will be replaced by Lisa Joyce. Georgina Self has stepped down from the position of treasurer, and the committee, and will be replaced by Corina Fitzsimons. Lorraine McDonnell stepped down from the secretary position, which has been filled by Jacinta Codd, and Lorraine McDonnell has become vice-chairperson. Avril Barry has stepped down from the committee.

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