

Preface



Peggy L. Schmidt, DVM, MS

Guest Editor

This issue is meant to be a user-friendly guide to the principles and practice of evidence-based veterinary medicine (EBVM) for the practicing veterinarian. It expands on the concepts introduced by Dr. Robert C. Rosenthal in “Evidence-based medicine concepts,” the introductory article of the January 2004 *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice* devoted to Nutraceuticals and Other Biologic Therapies.

Veterinary medicine is not what it used to be. The image of Norman Rockwell’s “At the Vet,” with the handkerchief-wrapped puppy on his young owner’s lap, still permeates the public impression of veterinary practice. This simple image of a puppy with a toothache in a waiting room filled with patients is a poignant reminder of the simplicity of veterinary practice in the past. Today, MRI scans, artificial joints, and organ transplants create a much different image of the profession. Veterinarians provide cutting-edge care for furry four-legged members of the family in much the same way that physicians care for the two-legged family members. Veterinary medical technologies continue to advance at exponential rates. Improvements in current methodologies are rapidly replaced by new diagnostic modalities, therapeutic measures, and prognostic tools.

As a practicing veterinarian, how can we keep up with these rapid changes? It sometimes seems an impossible task. It is not that we lack the capacity to understand veterinary medicine and new technology but that we simply lack the capacity to memorize everything there is to know to succeed. Being able to find the necessary information quickly and efficiently is, and will continue to be, the hallmark of successful veterinarians.

EBVM is a process of clinical decision making that allows veterinarians to find, appraise, and integrate current best evidence with individual clinical

expertise, clients' wishes, and patients' needs. It provides tools for identifying information needs, accessing best available evidence, appraising the usefulness and value of the evidence, integrating our knowledge with the patient's needs, and evaluating outcomes of the clinical decision. With practice, EBVM should allow the veterinary clinician to continue to offer the best available medicine as technology and knowledge continue to grow exponentially.

This issue first introduces you to the concept and controversy of EBVM. Individual articles focusing on each of the five steps of EBVM provide in-depth information for how you, as a practicing veterinarian, can adopt EBVM procedures in your daily practice. The three final articles offer examples of evidence-based medicine outcomes for specific questions in small animal practice involving medicine, nutrition, and surgery. The goal of this EBVM issue is to serve as a useful resource for EBVM in any veterinary practice.

Peggy L. Schmidt, DVM, MS

Assistant Professor

Population Health and Epidemiology

College of Veterinary Medicine

Western University of Health Sciences

309 East 2nd Street

Pomona, CA 91766-1854, USA

E-mail address: pschmidt@westernu.edu