

AVAR Participates in International Conference on Alternatives in Education

Susan Krebsbach, D.V.M., veterinary consultant for the AVAR, participated in The 2nd International Network for Humane Education (InterNICHE) Conference entitled "Alternatives in the Mainstream: Innovations in Life Science Education and Training." Held in Oslo, Norway in May, the conference had more than 100 attendees representing 32 different countries.

This conference was an exciting and inspiring event at the cutting-edge of educational innovation and practice. One of the only major international conferences on advanced learning tools and alternatives to animal experiments in education, it included leading international speakers, multimedia and virtual reality rooms, posters, and discussion forums and workshops. A wide variety of topics were covered, from the practical implementation of a willed body donation program, virtual reality methods for skills acquisition, and computer-based alternatives in education and research to experiences of conscientious objection and the legal status of alternatives and animal use in education.

In addition to participating in a variety of workshops, Dr. Krebsbach gave a presentation entitled "Veterinary Professionals Advocating for Alternatives in Veterinary Education." This subject was prompted by the increasing interest in alternatives to the harmful and fatal use of animals in veterinary education.

More and more veterinary students are voicing their ethical concerns and demanding that no animal be harmed or killed for the sake of their education. Through the advancement of technology, the development of skills models, and evolving partnerships with animal shelters and corporations, the practical use of alternatives in the classroom is more viable than ever before.

Dr. Krebsbach's presentation showed how veterinary professionals can play an integral role in promoting the use of alternatives in veterinary education and supporting veterinary students who are concerned about the ethical use of animals in their education. This support can be done in a variety of ways: for example, participation in Internet discussion groups, promoting willed body donation programs to clients, involvement with ethical panel discussions, offering hands-on externships, partaking in spay/neuter clinics, and encouraging corporate sponsorship in the purchase of alternatives. Dr. Krebsbach summarized that veterinary professionals are in the unique position to provide ethical leadership and encouragement that a veterinary student need not compromise his or her values to reach the goal of becoming a veterinarian.

Another speaker at the conference was Dr. Daniel Smeak, from The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine (OSU CVM), whose

presentation was entitled "How to Build an Ethically Responsible Veterinary Surgical Education." Beyond learning about the exciting developments in the surgical curriculum at OSU CVM, Dr. Smeak, in response to a question from Dr. Krebsbach, stated "...we saw that the students in the Alternative Program were just as good in the clinical fourth year as the students who went through the traditional [surgery curriculum] way. Because of that, we [OSU CVM] pretty much have gone to alternative methods..." "...It was those students in the early 1990s that really were the main reason why we, the instructors, were forced to look at alternatives." "...As instructors begin to feel more and more confident in the students, and we have more and more avenues to train them ethically, we [the veterinary profession] will completely eliminate that issue [terminal surgeries] in the coming years. I am hoping this trend continues." Dr. Krebsbach was one of the alternative students in the early 1990s, to which Dr. Smeak referred. She expressed how rewarding and empowering it is to know that the difficulties she and the other alternative students endured were worth the struggle, resulting in long-term positive change.

For more about The 2nd InterNICHE Conference or to listen to recordings of the conference presentation, go to <http://www.interniche.org/conf2005.html>.

AAVMC Hosts Conference on Use of Animals in Veterinary Medical Teaching, March 2006

The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) is hosting an educational symposium entitled, "The Use of Animals in Veterinary Medical Teaching," from March 9-10, 2006 in Washington, DC. The conference will focus on alternatives, animal welfare and ethical considerations, "best practices" in refining the use of live animals, and building relationships with the animal protection community.

AAVMC is currently accepting proposals for posters, abstracts, and models and simulators to be presented at the symposium. The deadline for submissions is February 3, 2006. For more information, go to www.aavmc.org/meetings_events_2006EducationalSymposium.htm or email EdSymp2006@aavmc.org or call (202) 371-9195.