

What Could We Do?

by
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The challenge of international veterinary medicine involves veterinarians whatever their field of specialization. Although the concept of international veterinary medicine is very broad and can not be readily defined, some of the major areas of need can be identified and critically assessed.

The world today presents few barriers to the movement of man and his beasts. In spite of stringent importation restrictions and quarantine measures there remains a distinct possibility that exotic diseases which would be disastrous to our animal industry could be introduced into the United States. Veterinarians in private practice, state, federal, commercial, and university employment should be fully aware of such dangers and should possess the ability to contribute to the diagnosis and control of exotic diseases.

International veterinary medicine involves far more than animal diseases. More and more the veterinary profession is being called upon to play an important role in the area of human health. In the areas of Public Health and the Zoonoses an understanding of the problems which exist in other parts of the world is essential, as is an appreciation of how international agencies cooperate to control diseases of man and animals.

The social responsibilities of the veterinary profession to society in both the na-

tional and international spheres must not be overlooked. In a world in which pollution, hunger, and especially animal protein deprivation are severe problems, the veterinary profession has a clear responsibility to contribute its expertise on an international basis.

The veterinary profession absorbs much of its influence from the rural milieu. As a result, the profession has a natural tendency toward provincialism, tendency to concern itself with the problems of the immediate environment to the exclusion of more global concerns. The profession should accept and be proud of the influence of the rural milieu but it should also be aware of its exceptional qualifications to contribute in the international sphere. In an effort to increase awareness of the international dimensions of our profession the authors will present some thoughts on ways in which international veterinary medicine can become a part of the professional and post graduate educational systems in our veterinary colleges.

The professional curricula in most United States veterinary colleges are very rigid and do not allow much flexibility. There are, however, a number of ways in which an international dimension could be added to these curricula without major reorganization. Courses in exotic infectious diseases or parasitic diseases could be offered as electives to be taken by qualified and interested undergraduates as well as graduate students. Such course credit could contribute to a degree of Master of Science in International Studies which could include a research component completed in a for-

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eign country. Some of the work contributing to such a degree would be completed prior to the completion of the D.V.M. degree.

Summer employment opportunities for students in veterinary medicine are available through the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (I.A.S.T.E.). If summer curricula in our veterinary colleges could be made more flexible, some students would be able to avail themselves to the available opportunities to the benefit of both students and the veterinary schools involved. Prior to receiving credits for such overseas duties the students would be expected to submit written reports and to present seminars for the benefit of their less adventurous colleagues.

The Honors Program, due to its flexibility, could more easily be involved in encouraging the awareness for international veterinary medicine. The Honors Program seminars could use qualified foreign graduates, undergraduates and faculty as well as United States citizens to introduce various aspects of international veterinary medicine.

Development of international awareness in the faculty is essential if programs directed to the students are to succeed. Faculty exchange programs should be developed which would bring highly qualified teachers to our colleges while members of our own faculty study in other countries. Returning faculty would be able to contribute substantially to programs with an international dimension.

It would be highly desirable to require, wherever it is possible, from participants in international programs written reports and visual aids. These reports and visual aids should be a property of a special section of the veterinary college library. In doing so, permanent records for later days would be available to whoever desires.

Maximum use should be made of visitors from other lands who through seminars and discussion sessions could help stimulate interest in problems which lie beyond our borders. Veterinary college publications should encourage the publication of articles pertaining to international veteri-

nary medicine. The allocation of a section of such a publication to international topics on a regular basis would be desirable.

Some of the approaches which have been suggested are already being put into effect in a few veterinary colleges. The College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University has an active faculty committee for international veterinary medicine with representation on the President's Council for International Programs. This committee is in the process of working out details of a faculty exchange program. Student representation on this committee would be a desirable dimension.

The *ISU Veterinarian* has in the past published articles with international flavor and could obtain further contributions from faculty members and students who have international experience to relate.

None of the suggestions which have been made are financially unfeasible since scholarships and travel grants are currently available on a competitive basis. The American Veterinary Medical Association may be in a position to institute small grants to students who desire to pursue summer studies in overseas countries. Several European countries have instituted a program designed to utilize the idealism and energies of their young graduates in aid programs in developing countries. This program, known as the "Associate Expert Program," resembles in some respects the Peace Corps but is directed more specifically at animal health programs.

The close proximity of the National Animal Disease Laboratory to the College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University results in a unique accumulation of highly trained and experienced veterinary research workers and teachers in the area of Ames. In a university which already has a broadly based commitment in education and technical development the veterinary expertise could readily be channelled into a strong international program.

The authors feel that the time is ripe for substantial efforts to be made toward encouraging international awareness and involvement. Such involvement can only be to the benefit of our profession and add to the well being of our human society.