

The Changing Image

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During this centennial year of the American Veterinary Medical Association many of us have given thought to the changing image of the veterinary profession. In visualizing the veterinarian of 100 years ago we see livery stables, archaic treatments for imaginary ailments such as "wolf in the tail" and "hollow horn," and "horse doctors" possessing little or no formal education.

The veterinarian of 1963 is a member of the medical profession and an integral part of agricultural management. To this dual role are added responsibilities in science and in education. Consequently, the changing image of the veterinary profession is intimately involved with the changing scene in agriculture, education, and science.



How do these changing scenes affect the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine? In agriculture, the farmer has become a rural businessman and the veterinarian his consultant, adviser, and animal physician. A new culture has emerged in which the farmer is not conspicuous in his vocational identity, anymore than is the lawyer, the banker, or the physician. The farmer is demanding and is receiving comparable levels of income and satisfactions from life.

It has been estimated that the farmer now feeds and clothes himself and twenty others, as contrasted to only nine others a generation ago and only three others a century earlier. Predictions indicate that by 1975 the same farmer will feed and clothe fifty others.

Through the efforts of agricultural scientists and veterinarians, farming has been transformed from its traditional role as a way of life to a business that confronts the modern farmer with many of the same problems that confront industry. The farmer must be a very astute manager. He uses large amounts of capital. Volume must be high and unit costs must be kept under control.

This changing climate in agriculture is the result of a scientific revolution. There have been more changes during our lifetime than during the previous 2000 years. If we could transport someone from Biblical times to an Iowa farm of less than 100 years ago, he would recognize almost every tool in use: the hoe, the rake, the plow. Transported to an Iowa farm of today, he would wonder if he were on another planet.

This scientific revolution is cumulative and irreversible. It has improved the efficiency on American farms beyond any doubt. But there are some misgivings. Can we assimilate the change quickly enough? What happens to the farmer as an individual? What happens to the type of veterinary service required?

There are decided trends in many areas of the United States toward consultative veterinary practice. Where this is economically possible it is proving to be satisfactory to the farmer and satisfying to the

veterinarian. The veterinarian is assuming the rightful role as an advisor in nutrition, sanitation, breeding practices, and economics, as well as in medicine. His image in rural America is changing, for the better.

As veterinarians, or as students, we are all concerned with the changing climate in professional education. We can not begin to keep up with all the changes in drugs, in methods of diagnosis, in laboratory techniques, and even with new diseases which are only hours away by jet transportation.

Our veterinary educators are constantly faced with questions. Will the traditional curriculum serve the needs of the future? How can we reasonably expect to cram all the known facts into four years of study?

Since the changing image of the profession is dependent to a large degree upon the quality of our professional education, we face the immediate problem of what to do with the continuing explosion of new knowledge. The addition of more and more courses has built up pressure during the last decade so that courses, packed and lengthened, finally reached a breaking point. It became apparent that the veterinary student, if he was to receive instruction in anything other than the pertinent sciences, would have to receive it before he entered professional school. Many courses have been altered to emphasize the teaching of principles rather than of specific information, much of which might soon become obsolete.

We are concerned with the quality of the veterinary student. High academic achievements are important to the changing image. In accepting students for the professional curriculum, however, we are not as concerned with improvements in entrance examinations as we are with a philosophy of admissions that takes a long look at the ultimate performance of each candidate. The educational world has long been familiar with the kindly, condescending phrase, "the late bloomer." Although it is extremely difficult to predict which near-miss will fall into this category, we will upgrade our college, even during this

highly competitive era in our history, if we admit some students whose intelligence is adequate to do commendable if not honors work, whose pursuit of excellence encompasses more than the intellectual, and whose eventual contributions to the leadership of their communities will bring acclaim to their profession. Intellectualism is just not enough.

There was a time when veterinary colleges stressed clinical training only. This is no longer adequate. We must have proper balance between research, professional and graduate clinical and laboratory training, and patient care. Research is the catalyst of graduate and professional education and improves teaching; without this stimulus a veterinary college becomes a trade school and its graduates mere technicians. Research must be placed in apposition to, not in opposition to, teaching. It must enhance, vitalize, and

participate in instruction, not compete with or hinder it.

The changing image of the veterinarian is involved with the changing climate of science. The practicing veterinarian must think like a scientist while appearing in the role of a humanitarian.

The attention of the public has been directed, in recent years, toward the scientist. The launching of a Russian sputnik was the triggering agent. At that time there was a widespread misunderstanding of the scientist as a person. A poll of high school students found that 14% thought there was something evil about scientists; 19% said scientists were more likely than other people to be mentally ill; 20% thought scientists had little regard for humanity; 34% believed scientists would not have normal family lives; and 38% thought scientists were willing to sacrifice the welfare of others to further their own interests. Obviously, and statistically, these

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concepts of the scientist were terribly wrong.

Now, the pendulum may have swung too far in the other direction. Science is frequently worshipped rather than scorned, a changing image which involves the veterinarian. Even grade school children are oriented in science at a fantastically high level. The image of the scientist has done an about face during the last few years. It is probably true that 90% of all scientists that have ever lived are still alive. The present image of the scientist as a hero may be justified and overdue, but he is still the same misunderstood man of a few years ago. Fashions are fickle.

In light of the changing scenes in agriculture, education, and science, the exact "image" of the veterinarian is difficult to ascertain. It is multi-faceted and ever-changing. There is the Dr. Kildare type, who substitutes love of animals, sympathy, and dedication for medical competence; there is the businessman-doctor; and there is the scientist-doctor.

The Dr. Kildare image has elements which are valuable in the doctor-client relationship. However, these elements have less direct effect upon the patient than they do in human medicine.

The increasingly prevalent image of the veterinarian as a businessman is disturbing. The businessman-doctor may submit to pressures contrary to his better judgment, and does not command the respect or the authority due a veterinarian-physician.

If we are to avoid the dangers and have the fullest possible benefit of modern medicine, we must have the scientist. But the image of the veterinarian as the dispassionate scientist is shunned even more than the image of the businessman-doctor. Harmful publicity concerned with animal experimentation and vivisection has influenced this. However, the modern veterinarian cannot sidestep the problems that science has created and he must deal with them as a scientist. But there is more to the practice of veterinary medicine than dispassionate science. The veterinarian can perform wonders with effective drugs, but even with ineffectual medica-

tion the compassionate veterinarian did a great deal for his patient. We cannot ignore the benefits of interest and good care. A scientific attitude is not incompatible with sympathy and a genuine concern for the patient.

The results of recent surveys have defined the reasons for "success" in veterinary practice. Although medical competence stands by itself as the most important factor, attitude toward clients, hospital cleanliness and attractiveness, and dress and personal appearance are rated as being extremely important. Frequent mention was made of "an aura of friendliness for the client," "interest in each client," "sympathy for the patient," "keeping active in community affairs," and "communication with each other, to share knowledge and techniques."

Perhaps the changing image of the veterinarian is due to the greater awareness of his role in society by the public. It may be due to his own awareness of his responsibilities to society. But let us recognize that the public expects the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine to be professional and scientific in every respect. It is imperative that he demand this of himself.

Book Review

VETERINARY MEDICINE. A textbook. Second edition. By D. C. Blood and J. A. Henderson. 1224 pp. Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company. \$15.85. By Ronald Hullinger

Following study of the first edition of this text printed in 1960, one can realize the volume fills a void in English veterinary literature. In this reprint of the first edition the authors have left unchanged the basic design of presentation but have included two additional chapters on diseases caused by the helminths and arthropods. The bibliographies of each chapter have been expanded and additional sections have been added to cover more diseases. The text is quite good for student reference and the general treatise of the text is to serve as a "... standard textbook dealing with the diseases and treatment of farm animals."