

Current and future role of the World Veterinary Association in continuing education for veterinarians

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Introduction

The World Veterinary Association (WVA) was founded in 1863, and has grown to represent over 500,000 veterinarians through their Member associations across six continents. Veterinary education is one of five strategic priorities for the WVA. The WVA emphasizes the need for lifelong learning through continuing education. Since veterinary medicine and science are constantly evolving, continuing education is essential for veterinarians to keep their knowledge updated with the latest developments, skills, and new technologies required to enable them to efficiently prevent and manage health risks at their animal source. Currently the WVA provides conferences and seminars for continuing education experiences and develops position papers for reference for its Member associations and policy makers. In 2016 the WVA launched a global online education portal to provide 24/7 access to free high-quality continuing education to all veterinarians in the world.

Veterinary Activities in Continuing Education

The WVA is a member of the ad hoc Group on Veterinary Education of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and participates in the OIE Conferences on Veterinary Education. The WVA advocates for support of the recommended OIE core competencies for “Day 1 graduates”, those veterinarians who have just graduated from a veterinary education establishment¹, through VEE accreditation systems, including the use of outcomes assessments to verify competency in specified veterinary knowledge and skills, and via testing/licensing/registration by national veterinary regulatory systems such as veterinary statutory bodies.

The WVA develops several position papers on a number of topics for reference by our Member associations in national and regional advocacy and educational efforts, including on such topics as identifying a veterinarian (by quality of education and recognised degree programs), recommended global Day One competencies, veterinary statutory bodies, the One Health concept, responsible use of antimicrobials, the role of the veterinarian in animal welfare, control of inappropriately aggressive dogs, and dog-mediated rabies.

World Veterinary Day was initiated by the World Veterinary Association in 2000 to highlight the important contribution of the veterinary profession to the benefit of society and all animals by organising regional conferences, seminars and other celebratory events related to the theme selected. In 2008 the WVA and the OIE agreed on the creation of the World Veterinary Day Award which rewards the most successful celebration of the contribution of the veterinary profession to society. Past and current themes selected for World Veterinary Day include diversity of the veterinary profession, veterinarians and livestock farmers, One World, One Health, rabies, antimicrobial resistance, vaccinations, animal welfare, vector-borne diseases with a zoonotic potential, and continuing education with a One Health focus. The 2017 theme has just been announced to be Antimicrobial Resistance - from awareness to action.

¹ World Organization of Animal Health (OIE) (2012), OIE recommendations on the Competencies of graduating veterinarians ('Day 1 graduates') to assure National Veterinary Services of quality. OIE, Paris.
http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Support_to_OIE_Members/Vet_Edu_AHG/DAY_1/DAYONE-B-ang-vC.pdf.

Current and Future Education Events

The WVA organises several education conferences and events. In fact, the WVA has a long history of educational conferences since its founding in 1863. Beginning in 2017, the World Veterinary Congress will be organised every year with the next Congress to be held in August 2017. Other events include global summits on animal welfare, global webinars, and unique global Tripartite (OIE, FAO, WHO) summits on One Health issues.

In 2013, the World Veterinary Association and the World Medical Association (WMA) agreed to organise a Global Conference on One Health (GCOH) to promote the One Health Concept to a wide audience of veterinarians and physicians, and veterinary and medical students. The first of these conferences was held in May 2015 in Madrid, Spain in cooperation with the Spanish Veterinary Association and the Spanish Medical Association. The objective was to move from addressing zoonotic and emerging diseases at the interface between humans, animals, natural ecosystems, and agriculture from a veterinary and medical perspective to addressing structural crises, fundamental unsustainability, and imbalances in current natural and social global systems, which produce conditions that allow for the emergence of disease. Recommendations were made for inter-professional student groups, professional associations, and important skills needed for effective influence which include leadership, networking, cooperation, facilitation, and trust.

The 2nd GCOH is scheduled for 10-11 November 2016 in the Fukuoka Prefecture of Japan in cooperation with the WVA, WMA, the Japanese Veterinary Medical Association, and the Japanese Medical Association. Information can be found at www.worldvet.org.

WVA Global Online Education Portal

The WVA, in partnership with the World Continuing Education Alliance (WCEA), has launched what is planned to be the most centralised and comprehensive online veterinary continuing education portal in the world. Since November 2014, educational content has been uploaded by individual and organisational experts to include almost 1000 courses for free access and registration of veterinary continuing education programs for veterinarians and veterinary technicians. It can be accessed online by laptops, tablets, and smartphones 24/7 for study at one's individual pace and schedule. The Portal can also be customised and branded for use by associations to meet the specific needs of their members for enhanced membership value.

Conclusion

WVA strongly supports lifelong learning through continuing education. WVA provides policy resources and support to our Members' associations for their educational and advocacy purposes, which is also available to other stakeholders on its website. WVA supports OIE recommended core competencies. Global conferences and seminars on key strategic themes are held every year to provide opportunities for veterinarians to keep their knowledge updated with the latest developments, skills, and new technologies required to enable them to efficiently prevent and manage health risks at their animal source. The WVA Global Online Education Portal is now available via the WVA website at www.worldvet.org, and provides a comprehensive repository for 24/7 continuing education for veterinarians and veterinary technicians.