

Decision-making in veterinary practice

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Introduction

In daily practice, a veterinarian has to judge information and decide whether it can be adequately implemented for a given case (1). In this context, it is of top priority to base decisions on the latest and soundest scientific findings (2). Since high evidence research findings are mostly gained through clinical trials, publications represent an important link between science and practice (3).

Objective:

Outline the current assessment
& employment of evidence-based veterinary medicine (EBVM)

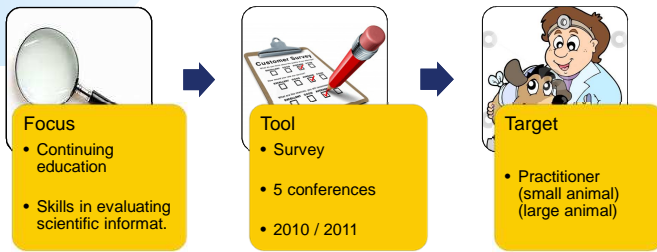


Figure 1: Survey among veterinary practitioners

Material and Methods

A survey amongst German veterinary practitioners was conducted throughout five conferences between Mai 2010 and November 2011. The questionnaire contained 32 questions concerning demographic data and profession (n = 4), qualification (n = 3), continuing education (n = 5) and skills concerning EBVM (n = 20).

literature as high or very high. However, only about half (52.1%) of all participants attributed themselves a high ability to evaluate the quality of the found literature.

Table 1: Data regarding continuing education considering several disciplines

Statement	Total ¹ (n=293)	Small animal (n=128)	Large animal ² (n=51)	General practice (n=109)
Hours of continuing education				
<10 hr per year	11	1	7	3
10-20 hr per year	117	36	19	61
20-40 hr per year	119	63	19	36
> 40 hr per year	40	26	5	8
Do you read veterinary journals regularly?				
No	30	17	5	8
Yes, German	251	106	41	99
Yes, English	60	31	14	13

Time spend on searching & working through scientific information

Time spend	Total	Small animal	Large animal	General practice
< 1 hour per week	22	6	5	11
Approx. 1 hour per week	84	37	16	31
2-5 hours per week	144	67	18	58
> 5 hours per week	37	15	9	9

¹ Multiple ticks performed

² Farm animals & horses

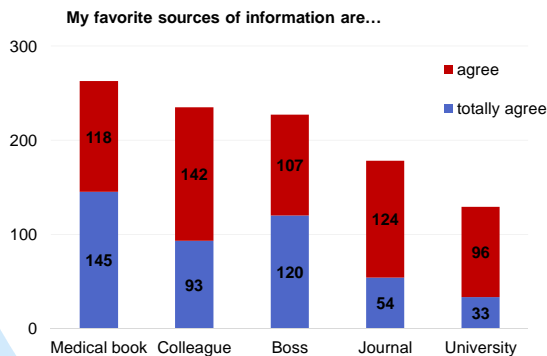


Figure 2

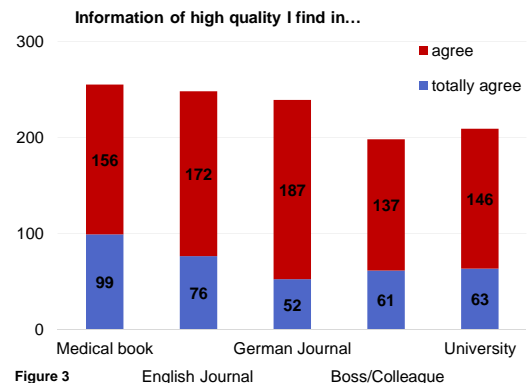


Figure 3

Results

In total, 293 questionnaires were returned. The majority of small animal practitioners (58.3%) and those working with farm animals (54.9%) declared being capable of comprehending scientific talks or papers in English without difficulty. 30 of all practitioners negated reading veterinary journals on a regular basis, while 60 stated to regularly read English veterinary journals (Table 1). The majority of the practitioners sought advice from their employer or a colleague (Figure 2). They attribute a high or very high quality to both information sources (Figure 3). 68.6% of the practitioners evaluated their skills in finding suitable

Conclusions & clinical relevance

Most practitioners are hardly able to assess the evidence of scientific information. Therefore, courses that introduce EBVM should be taught in veterinary education and post graduate education to train critical appraisal of information and to support decision-making based on valid, clinically relevant data.

References

- (1) Arlt S, Heuwieser W. Evidence based veterinary medicine. Dtsch Tierarztl Wochenschr 2005; 112 (4): 146-8.
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- (3) Antes G, Bassler D. Evidence-based medicine, dissemination of research information and the role of the medical journal. Dtsch Med Wochenschr 2000; 125 (38): 1119-21.