



Veterinary Evidence Student Awards 2022 podcast

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RCVS Knowledge:

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Kit Sturgess:

Hi, welcome to this podcast. I'm Kit Sturgess, Editor-in-Chief of Veterinary Evidence and I have the great pleasure today to be chatting with the winners of our Veterinary Evidence Student Awards for 2022. So we have had two papers that were given awards, one on the use of supraglottic devices in rabbits, and one on the value of telemedicine consultations compared to in-person consultations. So I want to get started. Very quickly, I'm just going to go around the young vets with me and just for a very brief introduction of who they are and where they are and their courses. Thank you. So over to you Max.

Max:

Hello, I'm Max. I am a final year student at the RVC right now.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. And Nara?

Nara:

Yep. My name is Nara and I'm in my final year at the Royal Veterinary College as well.

Kit Sturgess:

And Max and Nara were involved with the knowledge summary on tele consultation and Sarah, who's kindly joined us all the way from Sydney, Australia had just qualified. So big congratulations to her.

Sarah:

Hi. Well yes, as Kit said, my name's Sarah. I'm from the University of Sydney in Australia and I have officially finished my final year as of last Thursday. So very excited to join the profession.

Kit Sturgess:

Brilliant. So really just to as a bit of a kickoff, I wanted to talk to each of you about what motivated you to take part in the competition in the midst of a busy student course. What made you feel you wanted to take time out to produce an academic paper? So if we can start with Nara, what motivated you?

Nara:

I think I've always wanted to experience writing a research paper and I think because of COVID. I think I had honestly a little bit extra time on my hands in that moment and then we thought maybe a writing paper was, it's going to be an interesting experience and that's why I think I did what I did.

Kit Sturgess:

And anything particular that made you select what you wrote your knowledge summary on? Was that your idea or something that somebody suggested to you?

Nara:

I think Max can take the credit for the original idea, but I think it's something that I've been interested in, especially since COVID. I think we saw a shift in all of industries. I think it shifted to being online and I think we thought that's something good, interesting to look at.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. And so over to you, Max. So what motivated you and how did you come up with the idea about telemedicine comparing that within in-person consultations?

Max:

So similarly to Nara, I also always wanted to explore publishing a paper and actually we were both also involved in a research society at the RVC and it was always on our radar that it is an exciting and interesting thing to do, but then it is really, I think everyone appreciates that as a student it's quite hard to get published in a peer review journal because you don't know how to take the first steps normally because it just seems like such a esoteric thing to do that again, you just don't know what to do. However, with the knowledge summary competition, there were very clear steps and guidelines and there was a lot of support from the Veterinary Evidence side. So that's kind of what motivated us is that it was really clear what is expected of us and how to take the first steps.

The topic itself is quite an, I guess a somewhat funny story because when we first decided that we want to write something for Veterinary Evidence and we want to partake in this competition, but then we occurred a problem because in general I am more interested in the equine side of things and Nara more interested in the small animal side of things. So we just couldn't really think of a topic that would be interesting to both of us to write about at the same time. And we almost even considered writing about a farm because that would be in between our interests and this way neither of us would be in their own domain. But then just with COVID and everything and telemedicine becoming a bigger and bigger topic, that just kind of came up and as a light bulb moment, which was the magic solution that was an interesting topic for both of us to write. And it was actually very engaging and very little was done on it to this point, especially since COVID, a lot more papers were produced and since then again, not that many analysis were done.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. That's really interesting and I just wanted to pick up on your point about being interested in what you were writing about. How important was that rather than just sort of selecting a topic of, Veterinary Evidence has a list of topics called, "answer these" which have pre-formed PICOs.

Max:

Well I think it was key, because as you said, I mean everyone did it alongside our studies. So then there were definitely moments when you open an email with more edits that are better recommended and we have to redo a lot more work and reread the papers and rewrite subsections. And if you do it during rotations, it's very easy to just want to not to do it. And apologies to Jennifer,

there were a lot of later replies on our side, but I think because we were actually interested in the topic and were interested in the papers and seeing what the editors think about the way we analyzed them and if they agree, I think that was really key to us actually going through with everything and finishing the paper.

Kit Sturgess:

Thanks for that. I mean, I think that does illustrate what we've heard in past years as well, that being interested in what you're writing about makes a huge difference to the ease and motivation to carry on. So coming to you Sarah, so again, what motivated you to take the time to write and why supraglottic devices in rabbits?

Sarah:

It's funny that you say you have to be interested in the topic because that was actually a question that I wanted an answer to and it wasn't available because I started getting into clinical practice and I thought, "There's these two different devices, what is better?" And I really wanted to know the answer to that question. So I hopped on, tried to see if I could find a knowledge summary that answered that question and there wasn't one and I thought scrolling through the pages and I see that this great competition open as well and I thought what a great opportunity to try my hand in publications before I graduate. So yeah, for me the key thing was actually really being interested in the topic that I wanted an answer to and I learned a lot about other things on the way.

Kit Sturgess:

That that's brilliant and actually fantastic because we often have questions that we all go away and squirrel to look for information, but rarely do we have the motivation to publish to help others, and so you know guys, by answering these questions means that other people don't have to do all the legwork. And I'm sure you found that legwork is quite a lot to get your literature searches and things. So that's really brilliant. So Max, you mentioned about peer review process and just coming to Nara as the other part of your duo., How did you find the peer review process? Was it really scary or do you feel it was sufficiently supportive for you to feel you could get through it?

Nara:

I think for me, everything was a very new process. I think we've both turned university level papers where it's just kind of writing a research paper and then you give it to your tutor or another member of the academy team and they review it and they give it back to you. But this is all very new to me. But I think we were very well supported. All the edits were very helpful and it helped us because we've been reading our papers over and over again. I think it really helped us get a new perspective on what we wrote. And then there was definitely some moments where we were like, "Yes, that does not make sense what we wrote." And so it's just really good to get a few new eyes on we've written, essentially.

Kit Sturgess:

And Sarah, you too. Did you find that the peer review process was a sort of positive supportive thing or a little bit scary and a bit sort of feeling that you're being criticized?

Sarah:

I really loved the process, because as Nara has said, when you read a paper or anything, you've written multiple times, sentences make sense to you that may not make sense to other people on first read. And there were some things where especially, because it was the first time writing anything that I wouldn't have even thought would be important to include and the people who were commenting who peer reviewed my publication were actually, they're all experts in their field. They're people I've been to webinars in talking about these topics in exotic species and things and I was a bit like, "Oh my goodness, they're reviewing my paper." Which was really cool because their perspectives are really important because they're the ones out in clinic who are already experiencing these things. So them sort of directing us towards the right way to answer that clinical question in

the way that's going to actually help other veterinarians who are also interested in this clinical question was really key to making me really confident in the final product.

Kit Sturgess:

That's great. And what made you do it yourself alone rather than looking for other people to do the writing?

Sarah:

Well, so in our degree we have these units about research, they go through the different levels of information, how to do a literature search to find answers to what you are interested about. And it was actually, there was a final assessment for this unit that we did and that was actually the foundation for the paper that I ended up writing. So because I'd sort of done that assignment by myself, I thought it'd be a bit strange to bring other people in sort of last minute I guess, because all of the foundation had already been done. The papers had been reviewed, it was just about sort of I guess formatting it in a way that would be suitable for Veterinary Evidence.

So didn't mean to do it on my own originally, but I guess it was nice to have the challenge to know that I could do it because as you said, sometimes it can be difficult to collaborate with people with different schedules. Everybody in this profession is very busy with competing with our studies as well, very, very time heavy. So sometimes it can be a little bit difficult to get multiple people in the room. So maybe that was a little bit easier in my aspect because at least Jennifer was just waiting for a reply just for me rather than multiple people.

Kit Sturgess:

And I'm interested too because obviously as you did this as part of your course, how different was the final knowledge summary that was published compared to what you submitted for your coursework?

Sarah:

I guess, originally when I was doing the assignment through the university, there was really just one vet who was at one of their practices that the university runs who read it and they hadn't really done knowledge summaries before and it wasn't sort of really a more directed focused project in that way. It was just kind of a bit more general. Whereas once I started going through the peer review process, there were a lot of useful comments about what papers shouldn't actually be included and what maybe should be, and also what information you should be including and just the different comparisons you should really be making to make sure that you're really answering that clinical question. So a lot of the foundation was there, but the final product was definitely quite a bit more, I guess extensive and focused I think than the original assignment.

Kit Sturgess:

That's really interesting. And I guess the other question about the peer review process, which I think young writers sometimes struggle with is when a reviewer makes a comment but you disagree with it, whether you felt you were able to say, I've heard what you've said, but actually personally I feel that what we wrote was the right thing. Did any of you three come across that need to rebut a comment made in the review?

Sarah:

I mean, personally for me, I read through the comments and I was like, "This is different. This isn't something I would've necessarily thought." But I didn't feel uncomfortable, I guess seeking further clarification as to why they would maybe want that change made because I am so new to this process. So when they were saying, you should potentially include a specific statistic that I didn't think was relevant for an example, it was because of the way that I guess your responses are sort of managed through the online system, I didn't find it that daunting. It would've been nice I guess to have a sit down, talk about it, but obviously people are a little bit too busy for that, but it just meant that you can reply to something that they've said and they'll see that reply and then they can clarify

further what they mean. It was a bit of a back and forth I thought rather than a, this is how you should do something. It was a very collaborative process. So I didn't feel like any of the comments were unwarranted at all.

Kit Sturgess:

And what about you Max and Nara? How did you feel about whether you felt the comments were helpful in ways or whether they were some that you felt actually didn't quite agree with?

Nara:

Sure. I think most of the comments we ended up agreeing with, I think there was some where we were a bit like, we weren't sure, but then I think ultimately it was a matter of communicating back to the editors and then I think eventually we always found the way to just phrase things a bit differently to make in the end, the same point. But then it was definitely felt more of a collaboration than a, "I don't disagree with you. No, I don't agree with you."

Max:

Yeah, I agree. I think we were comfortable to reply and say, "Why would you say that given this and that?" The only somewhat funny situation, if I remember it correctly, was that two reviewers wanted opposite things. And once we did do what one of the reviewers wanted, spending a few hours rewriting things, the second reviewer said, "Why did you do make these changes? Because it made it worse." So then we had to go back and redo it again. But I suppose that's, again, I know would just say that's a normal thing that always happens in peer review process and we should just prepare for it to continuously happen in the future.

Kit Sturgess:

And that's very interesting and obviously then it also is great that review is a subjective process for the reviewers as well, that they look at things in different ways and that's why we tend to have more than one reviewer so that there is, make sure there's balance. But I thought that was really interesting points you made about this being a collaborative process and I think that's something that we're very keen at Veterinary Evidence to try and encourage a collaborative review process rather than it being sort of adversarial perhaps, which some journals perhaps that's a bit more how their review process works. So that's really useful information that you've gleaned from this and to pass on to younger vets who may, younger than yourselves anyway, who may be looking at coming through the process. So Sarah, besides learning more about supraglottic airway devices and risks and benefits in rabbits, what were the other things that you learned through going through that, a more formalized process of producing a knowledge summary?

Sarah:

I think the most important skill I learned was I guess, how to actually write a knowledge summary. I know that seems silly because you can read and look at a template and you read other people's work, but it's very different reading somebody else's knowledge summary and trying to make your own. So I think that's probably the biggest thing I learned from this experience. And I actually read a lot of other people's knowledge summaries to try and get an idea of how the flow really worked with these. So I actually learned a lot about a lot of other clinical questions that other people had been answering regarding exotics and small animals and even equine. So I guess for me, everybody in our industry we're always striving the best to do for our patients. We want to make sure that we are doing things that align with their best care.

And in this way, as you said, the collaboration, that's so important that we are collaborating because we are time poor not even just as a student just working in the profession. And I think having that collaboration from this experience, I've learned how important it is to do that. Like you said, researching a topic, doing a literature review just for your own benefit is great because you're looking at the most recent evidence that's out there. But putting that in a format that your

colleagues can use, that's really important. You are learning from each other and I think that that's what makes this profession so great to be in.

Kit Sturgess:

That's really good to hear. And I think really important if we think of the volume of information that's coming out in the veterinary field, no one person can review it and keep up to date. Particularly even just in fairly confined areas, let alone generally in veterinary medicine. So supporting each other I think is a really key thing that knowledge summaries hopefully provide. So Nara for you, besides as a learning a bit more about the formalization of reviewing a telemedicine consultation versus a in-person, what other sort of things did you learn during the process?

Nara:

I think writing a paper with another person was something that I learned how to do. I think doing it with Max, I think it's like you write one paper, but it really is two brains trying to write one single paper and try to form an objective opinion on the subject. So I think that was a new learning point, but I think also just writing a knowledge summary is possible. Publishing in my head was something I would do years down the line as a vet, it's not something I would do as a student. So I think just knowing that's possible to do that, I think that was quite valuable and I think it's definitely something that I would consider doing again because I think it's very useful.

Like what Sarah kind of alluded to, we are in a time poor profession, so I think just knowing where to look for information and I think looking through the questions, the questions you have on the website, it shows that there's a gap between so many different papers and just getting the simple answer to things. And I think this is a very good way to bridge the research papers into applicable things that you can use in day-to-day [inaudible 00:21:34] practice.

Kit Sturgess:

That's really interesting. And has it stimulated you to actually create research in the area? Having looked at what was relatively weak evidence for what we do, do you feel that actually you would want to produce more evidence about this subject? Because I think as you say in your article, it's likely that this is going to continue and this is a bit more of the way we're going to work in the future.

Nara:

Yeah, I think it's definitely on my radar. I think it's something that I'm quite interested in and I'm not sure if I can speak for Max as well, but I think it's something that has very big potential in the veterinary field, so it's something I'm definitely going to look into further.

Kit Sturgess:

That's brilliant. And for you, Max, do you think you learnt stuff about how you work and your learning style and your personal development as well as just purely the sort of writing a paper aspect of it?

Max:

I think taking constructive criticism and really internalizing it and using it to make the final product better was probably the most crucial step, because no one was really grading us as opposed to our normal academic experience where any criticism you take is a reduction in your grade. Whereas here, this is just valid criticism that we need to take, accept, and try to improve our paper. So I think that was really a very useful experience. Again, more about teamwork and managing time, since we did write it together, I think it was also important to try to share the workload but also find the time to meet and discuss it, make sure that we're all on the same page about the papers, about the final product, about our overall answer to the knowledge summary.

Kit Sturgess:

And that's very interesting. And as you'll be going into a profession where quality improvement and therefore assessing what we do and accepting that we can make changes and do things better, that's an important aspect of your future career. So getting some feelings that feedback isn't all about academic grading and criticism and that is actually a positive thing that that's really great to start that getting used to that because I think that is something that we all encounter in our professional lives. So that's really good. And Nara, I guess hopefully there are some people who are thinking about entering the 2023 student awards. So would you recommend it or would you say, "No, go and lie on a beach and have something to drink instead."

Nara:

I mean, I definitely go lie on the beach. But no, I think they should definitely go for it. I think it's not as daunting as it seems. I'm not saying it's not hard work because I think it is. You have to read tons of papers, you have to put them into a knowledge summary and then you have to read your papers over and over and over again. But I think it's something that's definitely worth doing, that's definitely worth your time and energy I think.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. And it's clear from listening to all of you that you're proud in what you've achieved and I guess few things in life that you are proud of that come with no work at all. So I guess that's the nature of it. Max, do you have any tips for any person who's thinking, "Well I'll go for the 2023 student awards." What things now your slightly older self would tell the person just starting out on your knowledge summary that you might do differently?

Max:

The main thing that I did tell to some students who were interested in it, are considering participating in the student awards was just to do it because it definitely seems much more daunting than it is. And again, the whole team was really, really friendly throughout the process. So it's almost that you're wondering if you should have done it earlier in the course when you had more time. I know it seems like Sarah maybe agrees with it, but it really was a very positive experience and therefore I wouldn't say that I would have done something differently except maybe when choosing a topic, in our case, it was actually quite hard to assess the different papers between each other because they're questionnaires and in a way they all measured different things because as soon as the phrasing was different, it became hard to compare the final outcome between the different questionnaires.

So definitely maybe I would also say to steer away from questionnaires and maybe do a very clinical question just because it would be a bit of a nicer paper to write. You would struggle a lot less, at least what we think, at the end, Nara I were talking about it. But overall again, I guess the main thing is just go ahead and do it because it really, again, wasn't that as difficult as it seems when you just look at the peer review process and the different other papers, you're like, "Oh my god, how could I ever do it?" Whereas if you just start doing it, you end up writing it and it's actually not that bad.

Kit Sturgess:

So really good advice. So getting pen to paper or finger to keyboard or whatever, just getting on with it is certainly valuable. And I think, you did pick a difficult topic, a subjective topic, and perhaps it says more about how we do our research that everybody does things slightly differently, which makes it then very difficult to actually combine those pieces of knowledge that may tell other people within the veterinary community about thinking a bit more about what they do and whether we should have more standardized approaches to things so that we can sumate our knowledge. But that's a really interesting point. And so Sarah, I mean obviously it's part of your course that you did the initial work and would you encourage other students coming in years to come that it's worth taking that extra step, taking that work effort you've already done and going forward with the knowledge summary?

Sarah:

Yeah, 100%. I mean, we do so much work in this degree and taking it that little step further, I think it's a really valuable experience as far as your learning goes as well because you're reading through all of these papers and you're reading through all of these different studies that have answered different questions and you're assessing what the strengths and the weaknesses are and that really develops your own clinical perspective. If you want to do further perspective studies in the future, you've sort of already got an introduction to where your potential weaknesses may lie and how you can potentially make them stronger. And I do agree with Max about it was a bit challenging doing it in final year, but I guess if I had advice for somebody who was doing it in final year, just set aside that time, don't get stressed out because everybody's very lovely and supportive.

I know Jennifer was answering many emails from me sometimes when I had questions about my paper. And I think that that in itself is an encouragement to enter a competition like this because you are learning through the process of writing a knowledge summary that's actually going to help yourself, your colleagues. And I have to say, it's probably going to be useful to your career as well. It looks pretty good on your resume to already have a published paper. And if you have a special interest, for example, for me in exotics, even if you're applying for your final year placements, if you can say, "Hey, I have a paper published in this topic." You might get a placement at a clinic that it's quite challenging to get a placement at if it's very competitive.

Same with once you start looking at your future careers, if you've already published a paper again, it's a great thing to say, "Hey, I'm really interested in these other topics. I really went above and beyond during my degree to actually contribute to research as a whole." And it just shows that you're a little bit more motivated and driven. So I definitely would recommend that anybody in the position to do so would enter the competition.

Kit Sturgess:

That's really interesting that there are other benefits, as you say, just beyond the learning that you get from publishing the paper to your career. So that's a really good thing to get across. So just really just wanted to pop around the one last time for any final comments you have. So Nara, any final comments or thoughts that you want to share with the listeners?

Nara:

No, just that it's a fun process. You definitely learn a lot, but like I said, it's worth it and it's something very valuable to do during your student career, I guess.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. And Max?

Max:

Actually, what Sarah just said reminded me of a huge positive side to doing this, which is you understand how to assess quality of evidence, but that also means that you understand how to yourself make hopefully better design studies. So study designs, just because you then start to see all the potential flaws as you are thinking, oh, I'll do this, but then you realize, oh, I'm not controlling for this, that, and that. And that I think is also really useful if you are considering a future career in research or just generally considering to publish any research. So I think that's definitely also another valuable externality of doing the student awards.

Kit Sturgess:

And that's an excellent piece of advice. A number of studies I think, fall because they're poorly designed in the first place and that makes producing an answer really difficult and more time in the design phase, I think often really does pay rewards in terms of the final outcome. So really great piece of advice to everyone out there doing research. And finally, to you Sarah.

Sarah:

Well I guess it would just be reiterating everything that we've already said, but you can do this. It does seem really scary at the start. When you're looking at... If someone asked me at the start of this degree, "Oh, do you think you'll publish a paper during your degree?" I would have said, "Are you crazy? No." But after this process, it's definitely possible. And I think people should go for it. Even if they're just, "Oh, I won't get my draft finished in time for the competition." Doesn't matter, keep working at it in your spare time. You can still submit it even outside of the competition and it's valuable regardless if you submit it now, or you submit it when you graduated, or you submit it later in the year, it really is a great tool to have in your kit to know how to assess papers, quality of evidence, and just to develop your own writing skills.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. And that's a really important point that Sarah's made that the review process for the student awards is exactly the same as our review process for anything. So if you don't manage to get it finished, it's the same standard throughout the journal and therefore carry on. That's really, really good advice. So I think it's a good point to wrap up, I'd like to thank Max, Nara, and Sarah for their time and enthusiasm. It's really great for me as I come to the twilight of my career to see that the profession is in safe hands and there are young vets out there who are keen to push our knowledge forward and tell me in 20 years all the things that I was doing wrong because I didn't have the right evidence to make my decisions. So thank you very much for everyone. I also like to thank Jenny and the editorial team at Veterinary Evidence, because it's quite clear from our discussions how much help and support they give to young writers making them able to get through this process. So thanks to everyone and I've hoped you enjoyed this podcast.

Sarah:

Thanks so much, Kit.

Nara:

Thank you, Kit.

Max:

Thank you.

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