

Irish Veterinary Nursing Association Congress 2016

The seventh annual Irish Veterinary Nursing Association (IVNA) Congress headed west this year and was held in the Galway Bay Hotel. This year the Congress was sponsored by Royal Canin and Allianz with approximately 150 delegates registered for the first day alone, writes IVNA Vice Chairperson Lorraine McDonnell RVN



Winner of Veterinary Nurse of the Year, Catherine Hartin (centre); with Lisa Joyce, IVNA Chairperson (left) and Margarette Tracey, Royal Canin (right). Photo: Eithne O'Brien.

This year's lectures were based on delegates' feedback sheets from last year's Congress and featured a wide range of topics, which was applicable to both the newly qualified nurse as well as the more experienced nurse.

COMPANION ANIMAL TREATMENT UPDATES

Louise O'Dwyer RVN MBA BSc VTS (ECC) DipAVN opened the Congress with a very comprehensive lecture entitled: *Flying solo emergencies and what to do first*. Louise introduced the telephone triage and the questions that need to be asked in order to assess the severity of an emergency.

She explained that on arrival to the clinic, all body systems should be assessed and a brief capsular history (age, signalment and medications) should be obtained from the owner. Louise highlighted the situations that required immediate attention, eg. seizures, respiratory distress, active bleeding etc and the importance of patient assessment, which included the ABCD method, was also outlined in great detail.

Advanced dentistry – the difference you can make, by Suzanne Kelly MVB GpCert (WVA and CPM) brought us through the finer points of dentistry and what the nurse can do. Veterinary nurses are in an ideal position to observe and educate owners on oral care. Patients under general anaesthesia for other procedures provide the ideal opportunity to examine the teeth for potential issues. Nurses can offer free dental clinics, which again gives the

perfect opportunity for oral exams and the option to book animals in for comprehensive oral health and treatment (COHAT), if required. Suzanne showed delegates the most common dental issues seen in practice, from retained deciduous teeth, gingivitis, feline odontoclastic resorption lesions (FORLs), malocclusion, to worn and discoloured teeth. Nurses have a vital role in the prevention and treatment of some of these dental conditions. Suzanne reiterated the importance of nurses not being asked to remove retained deciduous teeth, as this should only be carried out by a veterinary surgeon due to the proximity of the permanent teeth and the huge potential for damage to do the same.

After a short break, Linda Ryan DipAVN (Medical) VTS (oncology) RVN discussed *Low-stress handling of the cat, in practice*. She took us through an in-depth look at the stages from kittens to the middle-aged cat. The key is educating both clients and staff about feline handling. Preparation will help reduce stress in consult, as elevated feline stress levels may alter physical exam and lab tests, which can lead to incorrect diagnosis. She explored social behaviour and communication, recognising the difference between anxiety and fear using photos as an example. Linda gave some helpful tips for clients and cats and also how the vet's practice environment should be prepared – from the waiting room to the consult room. She also discussed recognising and responding to cat signals and minimising the stress of procedures and, in particular, restraint methods.

In a change to schedule, Anne-Marie Byrne, Veterinary Ireland Council's nurse representative, introduced Larry Ryan (Behaviour & Attitudes), who commissioned the National Nursing Survey 2016. Larry gave us a comprehensive insight into the results from the recent national survey on the nursing profession (further information on this survey will be published in the coming months).

In the afternoon, Linda Ryan discussed *Quality of life and palliative care of the cancer patient*. As cancer is one of the most common ailments seen in practice, there are a number of treatments available, including chemotherapy. These treatments can be offered to help provide a good quality of life. Linda gave an introduction to chemotherapy and emphasised that quality of life is paramount, so chemotherapy drug protocols in animals should be less aggressive than those used in humans. She reviewed patient-related toxins with common adverse effects and management. A clear protocol was discussed in relation to safe preparation and administration of chemotherapy to both patient and staff members involved, from the



Winner of Student Nurse of the Year, Elaine Hughes (centre); with Lisa Joyce, IVNA Chairperson (left); and Joe Campbell, Allianz (right). Photo: Eithne O'Brien.

moment a patient enters the practice until they leave again. Preparation, storage and the safe disposal of chemotherapy drugs were also outlined.

Alexander Walsh from Personal Safety Ireland Ltd gave a very comprehensive look at personal safety within the workplace and outside. He advised us what to do in a situation where a confrontation presents itself in the workplace, focusing on women on their own, threat assessment, in particular how to read people's body language and expressions. He also discussed considerations to the veterinary practice, such as CCTV and reiterated the five Ps: planning, preparation, prevention, poor and performance.

The final lecture on Saturday was given by Louise O'Dwyer – *Anaesthesia for the brachycephalic patient*. As brachycephalic patients are commonly encountered in canine breeds, they require special considerations for anaesthesia due to their anatomical abnormalities. Louise went through points to remember when dealing with these breeds, including a thorough history where any symptoms seen have been recently treated or otherwise. An extensive pre-operative assessment to determine if any disease is present is also required and checklist, prior to surgery, was discussed to include planning procedure, temperament, expertise, breed and American Society of Anaesthesiologists (ASA) category. Pre-medication was discussed along with deep sedation with the pros and cons for specific breeds discussed. Vigilant monitoring during anaesthesia, right through to the recovery stage, is very important and the best way to reduce any complications.

WOUND MANAGEMENT AND PHYSIOTHERAPY

The second day of the IVNA Congress focused on two topics – wound management and physiotherapy. New techniques in wound management given by Louise O'Dwyer, who presented at the Congress the previous day, was a very informative lecture, concentrating on wound management and how emergency treatment of wounds can be carried out prior to definitive treatment later on, with the emphasis being on bleeding being controlled first. Louise discussed the overview of wound healing; the aetiology



Winner of Support Staff of the Year, Kim Ryall (centre); with Lisa Joyce, IVNA Chairperson (left); and Dorothy McHugh, Bayer. Photo: Eithne O'Brien.

of wounds; preventing further contamination; and lavage techniques. More importantly, the control of contamination; complication in wound healing from poor nutrition; failure in wound contraction; indolent wounds; infection; exposed bone; underlying metabolic disease; wound dehiscence; post-operative haemorrhage; and haematomas were also reviewed. She also highlighted the importance of knowing the different wound dressings available; the process of bandaging of the effected limb; the importance of pressure relief bandaging; head-over-ear-bandage; the loved tail bandage; foot bandage; thorax and abdominal bandage; spica splint; as well as complications and monitoring. Maria Gomez-Sanchez Gomez RVN, BSc and PT, Cert spoke about the *Introduction to orthopaedic postoperative rehabilitation* and gave a very in-depth session to basic physiotherapy to postoperative care.

Delegates were given a recap on muscle anatomy and the theory behind physiotherapy. With the help of four dogs, Maria showed the simple techniques, which nurses use in practice with postoperative orthopaedic cases. There are no set protocols in place as every patient is different with a lot of factors influencing a safe, physical therapy protocol. The aim of physiotherapy is to relax hypertonic muscles, to strengthen weak muscles and to enhance proprioception in all cases. Maria demonstrated myofascial and gentle massage in various areas, passive range of motion on fore and hind limbs and also covered withdrawal reflexes, which can help to increase proprioception. It was important to note that one should be aware of their own limitations and strengths to protect the welfare of the patient.

Following on from the AGM, MaryKate Lynch, Emily O'Connor and Sarah Duinnence announced they were stepping down from the Committee, with the new IVN Committee comprising of:

- **Chairperson:** Lisa Joyce;
- **Vice Chairperson:** Lorraine McDonnell;
- **Secretary:** Jacinta Codd;
- **Treasurer:** Eilis Nichol;
- **PRO:** Corina Fitzsimons; and
- **Committee members:** Mairead Deasy, Ciara O'Reilly and Caroline O'Regan.