

VBMA Essay

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Prior to veterinary school I had never really considered many forms of alternative medicine except chiropractics. However, about year and a half ago my fourteen-year-old Miniature Schnauzer Midnight was diagnosed with intervertebral disc disease. She was stable over the last year until I went home for Christmas. My mom had said she was deteriorating, but I did not imagine how much. When I came home she had her head permanently cocked to one side. We took her to the vet and while traditional modalities helped, she still was not herself.

This past spring I took Complementary and Alternative Veterinary Medicine with one of our clinicians and it truly opened my eyes. She presented us with many alternatives paired with traditional medicine to help facilitate a moderate approach to the alternatives which I appreciated. We explored Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine, acupuncture, laser therapies, rehabilitation, chiropractics, and other various aspects of non-traditional medicine. While I have had acupuncture done to myself and did not find it particularly useful, taking this class made me realize that providing alternatives to my clients and my patients makes me a better doctor and help them with what they need.

After taking this class I really encouraged my mom to take Midnight to see someone certified in acupuncture. I have not been home since she started treatments, but my mom says she is like a little puppy again. She has regained her freedom and plays with the other dogs again living an active lifestyle, one not hindered in pain. While acupuncture is not herbal medicine, it parallels the importance of alternative medicine and the use of herbs. I have been able to shadow the clinician that taught our class in the teaching hospital and witness the utilization of herbs. For some of these patients the utilization of various herbs really impacts their quality of life.

Outside of the teaching hospital I have encountered individuals using CBD oil from marijuana for their pets who have seen drastic improvements in their pet's condition. While I think the use of CBD is more common in states that have legalized marijuana and there are mountains of research to be done, I am particularly excited for the prospects of this herb because of its availability and success I have seen. While using any herb incorrectly can have dire consequences, I hope that more research can be put into them so that they become another tool for practitioners to use more readily.

Personally, taking the alternatives course last semester was eye opening and I look forward to taking similarly related classes in the future since my schooling has just begun. I am also a member of the integrative medicine club that has brought in guest speakers for alternative medicine approaches which I have been able to learn from as well. Through my training I hope to one day offer my clients alternatives free of judgement in a safe, controlled environment for them and their pet so everyone can have a positive experience. Though traditional medicine is what our profession is built on, it is important to remember that every patient and client is an individual and needs a treatment that will fit them and I hope to be the person to guide them through the modality that best works for them.