

### The Future

I believe integrative medicine is the future of veterinary medicine. In this day and age, so many people are turning to holistic remedies and alternative treatments for their entire families, including their pets. Acupuncture, essential oils, energy work, and herbal therapy are just a few of the modalities that are increasing in popularity. As society evolves, it is my belief that more people will continue to turn to holistic remedies and desire advice on using these remedies for themselves, as well as their pets. I strive to be able to provide my future patients with the most individualized, knowledgeable, and well-rounded care possible; getting education in alternative modalities, like herbal therapy, is the first step to achieving this.

Like most scientifically minded individuals, I was skeptical of alternative medicine at first. However, when I worked in a strictly Western medicine veterinary clinic prior to veterinary school it was astonishing how many clients came in and admitted to using over-the-counter herbal remedies for their pets that they bought online. These clients would have anecdotes about the wonders of these remedies for themselves and their pets. After a while, you have to be curious and open-minded about herbal remedies and other alternative modalities that so many clients are raving about. This began my exploration into the world of alternative and integrative veterinary medicine.

What completely abolished any skepticism in my mind was observing holistic medicine in action. Throughout veterinary school I have been lucky to find wonderful mentors that practice acupuncture, herbal therapy, and variety of other alternative modalities. Seeing really is believing; I was fascinated by the success practitioners were having with strictly holistic medicine, mainly acupuncture and herbal therapy. Often owners were bringing in their pets as a last resort, because Western therapies failed and euthanasia was recommended. In many cases it was truly astonishing how successful holistic medicine could be and how it changed the lives of these last chance patients. These experiences inspired me to learn as much as possible about holistic medicine and become knowledgeable and certified in as many alternative modalities as possible.

I believe that all veterinary students should take the opportunity to observe a good alternative medicine practitioner with an open mind. There are so many fascinating and beneficial modalities, like herbal therapy, that are not taught in veterinary school. However, with some motivation there are plenty of opportunities to learn about holistic medicine, including: certification courses in acupuncture, herbal therapy, chiropractic, and physical rehabilitation; CE lectures at holistic conferences (AHVMA, VBMA, AAVA, IVAS, etc); and veterinary school holistic club sponsored lectures. There are even opportunities for students to be involved in organized veterinary medicine, by applying to be on the student executive board of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association (SAHVMA). As a current board member, I can attest to the amazing experience serving on the SAHVMA board can be.

As the field of veterinary medicine continues to evolve, I strongly believe that holistic medicine will continue to grow and be at the forefront of veterinary innovation. Clients are going to continue to seek out holistic treatments: herbs instead of antibiotics or steroids, acupuncture instead of opioids for pain, and multimodal holistic therapies instead of surgery. Thus, as I continue my journey in veterinary medicine I strive to learn all that I can about holistic medicine so that I can provide my future clientele with the most unique care to better help pets live happier, healthier, longer, and as pain-free as possible.