

Survey Raises Important Questions say Hill's

Hill's Pet Nutrition has been asking last year's graduates how they feel about clinical nutrition, with some interesting results. Despite teaching of clinical nutrition moving up the agenda for most vet schools, over one third of respondents said that they did not feel confident about applying their knowledge of pet nutrition to clinical cases. The remaining two thirds claimed to be reasonably confident but no respondent felt very confident in this area.

When it comes to advising clients 86 per cent would make a nutritional recommendation for their clinical cases but of those, half left it up to the nurse to decide on the brand of food. For fourteen per cent of the new graduates, the decision was made to allow nurses to decide on the type of nutrition and brand.

The respondents were also asked about their preferred form of nutritional CPD support. Despite the advances in on-line CPD, the majority expressed a preference for face to face teaching in the form of in-clinic updates from reps, speaker tours and roadshows. However e-updates and on-line courses were preferred over paper correspondence courses.

Adrian Pratt, Veterinary Affairs Manager at Hill's Pet Nutrition has been mulling over the results, *"We recognise that our short survey dealt with only a small number of respondents but it gave us much food for thought. It's disappointing, for ourselves, but more so for the newly qualified vets, that a significant number don't feel confident about making nutritional recommendations. Having been in those 'new vet' shoes, I have to wonder whether this is a crisis of confidence or actually founded on a real or perceived lack of knowledge and also whether this is a finding that applies only to nutrition or affects other areas too. We would very much like to know the answers to these questions because we think that this could be a source of very considerable stress to the individuals concerned."*

He continued, *"Our survey doesn't really tell us whether this is resulting in vets delegating nutritional matters to their nurses because nurses are seen to have at least equivalent, or possibly greater knowledge of nutritional matters and are respected as fellow professionals, or whether these cases are being passed to the nurses with a sigh of relief because the vet doesn't feel able to deal with them. I also found*

it interesting that vets did not want to be seen to be actively recommending a particular brand, despite the wide variations in clinical evidence and nutritional make up between brands. I do wonder if there could be a perception here that 'brand' is a commercial decision that can be made by another member of the healthcare team, rather than a clinical decision."

Marge Chandler, DVM, MS, DACVN, MACVSc, DACVIM, DECVIM-CA, MRCVS is one of the two American College of Veterinary Nutrition diplomates in the UK (along with Dr Dan Chan) and believes that nutrition is well integrated at the R(D)SVS, *"In addition to the general basics, we also teach the basics of small animal nutrition for healthy adult cats and dogs, kittens and puppies, with some emphasis on the special needs of cats. During the clinical lectures there is information provided for disease specific nutritional needs, for example with chronic kidney disease, liver disease, and gastrointestinal disorders. In their final year, our students are given an interactive tutorial on clinical nutrition for hospitalized small animal patients. In addition to this tutorial, we discuss the patients' nutritional requirements and supplementation during rounds, and there is a nutrition form for each medicine in-patient requiring supplementation."*

For those who need access to good quality post-graduate CPD on the topic, Hill's has just launched the latest Veterinary Nutrition Academy (VNA) course. VNA Level 3 is all about applying nutritional principles to make a recommendation appropriate to a clinical case. Anyone who would like to brush up on the topic can register with VNA – registration and the course itself is free of charge. VNA also gives access to booking forms for Hill's roadshows and other events.

"While 'face to face' training events are still proving to be highly popular, it is clear that travel time and cost can significantly hinder access to CPD particularly for those with family commitments or in geographically remote locations and our on-line training courses are continuing to grow in popularity," commented Adrian Pratt.

Registration to VNA is free at:
www.myhillspet.com/vna.

To complete registration the practice U number will be required and this is available by contacting Jane Quail at Hill's on **01923 814454**.

