

Masters Group

The Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) has been very interested in promoting and developing the skills of the GP vet throughout its history. In 1998, the discussions in the Society had begun to be more intense and a working party was formed. This led to the presentation of a paper on the subject of postgraduate veterinary education by the three members of the Working Party at the SPVS conference in Torquay during Chris Chesney's Presidential year 2000. 'Was a GP certificate desirable, practical, achievable and feasible?'

Subsequently, the debate led to the formation of a partnership between SPVS, the Professional Development Foundation and Middlesex University; and this produced the first SPVS Masters Group.

This Group was recruited in May 2001, and commenced their work to explore the question: 'What are the postgraduate educational needs of the GP vet in the UK?' Each member of the group undertook a research project in their MSc that was to prove of considerable importance to the profession.

The findings of the group were presented to SPVS and the Royal College of Veterinary surgeons (RCVS) in the autumn of 2003. All 8 members of the Group graduated at a ceremony at the RCVS in February 2004 which was a momentous occasion as they were the first pioneers to achieve an MSc in general veterinary practice. This was the first time that in practice research into education and professional development had been completed by GP Vets for GP Vets, and it represented a considerable body of research by this group but importantly included surveys of the whole profession.

The RCVS subsequently confirmed that the traditional postgraduate certificates would be replaced with a modular Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP) which reflected many of the recommendations of the group and the RCVS working party that had liaised considerably over the period of the research. In November 2007, RCVS changed the system of postgraduate education in the veterinary profession significantly for many years to come and the changes may act as a model for other professions in the future.

Five of the original eight members of the group undertook doctorate research projects to expand and develop their research, and 4 completed by 2006 with one still in progress but nearing completion at Dec 2010. All of the members of the group remain committed to the introduction and implementation of the new RCVS modular Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice and the greater involvement of the practising arm of the profession in the development of veterinary education in the future.

The new RCVS CertAVP is a work-based learning experience accredited to University standards, designed to be flexible to meet the needs of the many varieties of work done by different GP vets. It is at MSc level, although in credit terms is 1/3rd of an MSc, and the credits can be used to take the student forward to complete a full MSc if the student chooses this option. The A,B and C modules offer a comprehensive list to suit individual practitioner needs in both clinical and non clinical disciplines.

By December 2010 there were over 600 vets enrolled in the RCVS CertAVP, with several having completed the whole Certificate demonstrating high levels of competencies, personal satisfaction and rewards for their practices in improved performance.