

Dr Wendela Wapenaar interviews Dr Ana M. Bravo del Moral

President of the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE)

Could you explain the mission and objectives of your organization, the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE)?

The EAEVE is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1988 by rectors and deans/directors of establishments of veterinary training, with the mission to represent its members and devoted to harmonize and improve the quality standards of veterinary education in Europe in agreement with the European Directives 2005/36/EU and 2013/55/EU through the development of the European System of Evaluation of Veterinary Training (ESEVT), run by EAEVE with the collaboration of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE).

Are there organizations in other areas of education that would fulfill a similar role as EAEVE?

There are some other organizations that follow an international peer profession-specific evaluation of the establishment for higher education, as ACOVENE (veterinary nurses).

One of the objectives of EAEVE is to assure schools, students and the public that veterinary teaching establishments in Europe deliver equally good quality veterinary surgeons; how does EAEVE evaluate equality in level of quality between the different veterinary schools?

ESEVT started by European Commission mandate 30 years ago, with the aim of harmonisation of veterinary education and quality assurance of the teaching in veterinary schools, being considered as fundamental for ensuring the health and safety of animals and people in the free market. A system similar to ESEVT is already in place and officially recognized for veterinarians licensing purposes in USA and Australia.

ESEVT assess whether an establishment conforms to the inputs required by the European Directives (Directive 2005/36 as complemented by Directive 2013/55). It is the only Europe-wide profession specific evaluation system. It sets the standards and promotes harmonisation of veterinary training in the European Union and beyond by applying Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in the evaluation of veterinary schools. EAEVE and FVE regularly update the SOPs, in order to ensure compliance with

developments in veterinary science and EU law, for instance, that the given school has appropriate university-owned facilities, equipment, staff and procedures for education and research in all subjects of the core professional curriculum.

There are many innovative teaching methods developed in veterinary establishments, such as massive online open courses, courses focusing on personal and professional skills and schools delivering part of their clinical training via community based practices away from a university hospital. What do you think are the opportunities and threats of these developments?

All these new methodologies are in fact opportunities to increase the quality of training. ESEVT SOP recognizes Extra Mural Studies (EMS) organized outside the Establishment, the student being under the direct supervision of a non-academic person (e.g. a practitioner). But EMS cannot replace the core intramural training or the extramural training under the direct supervision of an academic staff.

What criteria does EAEVE use when approving institutions; could you give an example of strengths and weaknesses you came across in institutions visited by EAEVE?

ESEVT has very many criteria (we better use “indicators”) in the SOPs! We revise 13 aspects of the school: Objectives, Organisation, Finances, Curriculum, Teaching Quality and Evaluation, Facilities and Equipment, Animals and Teaching Materials of Animal Origin, Library and Learning Resources, Admission and Enrolment, Academic and Support Staff, Continuing Education, Postgraduate Education and Research Training. Every school after the evaluation receives the final evaluation report addressing the strengths and weaknesses. They vary amongst the different establishments. I recommend consulting the final reports of all evaluated establishments in our website (<http://www.eaeve.org/visitations.html>). We also publish a list of the 22 major deficiencies more commonly encountered in the visitations (http://www.eaeve.org/fileadmin/downloads/visitation_schedule/List_of_Major_Deficiencies_May2013.pdf)

Currently a diploma from a European veterinary school provides one with the opportunity to work in any European country and accreditation from EAEVE is not a prerequisite. This sometimes creates challenging situations with new graduates working in countries where they have limited awareness of local disease and where language can be a barrier. What is EAEVE’s view on this situation and how can we optimize this opportunity to work in different EU countries?

EAEVE’s approval is not a prerequisite for vets to work at European level, so currently there is no mechanism to guarantee that veterinary schools in the EU Member States fulfil the requirements of the Directives. Further to this, there are no implications in case that a Member State does not comply with the Directives. ESEVT is the best guarantee for EU Member States to trust veterinary services in the other EU member states. In fact, the EAEVE accreditation/approval is a prerequisite for the recognition of academic achievements and degrees, student and staff mobility as well as scientific cooperation in the international veterinary community. For instance, the European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS) only admits veterinary graduates to enter specialisation courses to obtain a Diplomate status in Europe that are coming from an Establishment approved by the ESEVT. To further prove EAEVE’s international standing and renown, it is necessary to

mention that most of the European Establishments for Veterinary Education (75 schools) are members of EAEVE, with the exception of Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian schools, and to date, 75% of the European Establishments are approved or conditionally approved by the ESEVT.

What is your opinion on the future of veterinary medicine, with regards to:

Education: can we educate omni-competent veterinary surgeons or would you prefer species/discipline tracking?

For the future challenges to face, in my opinion it is better to have a degree as omni-competent veterinarian. Veterinarians have a tradition as animal doctors. The increasing value of animals as individuals in our society demand a higher professional qualification of veterinary practitioners to offer a more specialized medical care as occurs in human Medicine. Tracking oriented in species try to “specialize” students but, even being a good clinical training it is not enough; there is a need of postgraduate specialization and lifelong learning attitude. On the contrary, with a wide, basic curriculum in all species vets are ready, for instance, to integrate in multidisciplinary teams and to participate in the One Health approach.

Internationalization: universities as international training centres instead of training future vets to be employed locally

University is not focused any more on local employability of graduates. We have to prepare good professionals independently if they will work locally or not.

Numerous fixus and employability: do we need a limit to the number of schools/students?

Veterinary degree is one of the most expensive ones so it would be desirable to invest efficiently the money in the case of public Universities in order to adjust the number of graduates to the labor market. Of course we would graduate more professionals than required locally to work outside, but it is more important to train a lesser number of students with a higher quality standard.

Mental health in the profession

Some fields of veterinary profession are very demanding and with a high level of responsibility, mainly in the clinic. Practitioners sometimes suffer of burn-out and depression. In Spain we don't have a higher suicide rate amongst vets in comparison with other professions but it seems to be a problem in some other countries.

Employability outside veterinary practice

A modern veterinarian is much more than a practitioner. Our challenging society demand a professional able to work efficiently as a member of a multidisciplinary team, well trained in Animal Health and Welfare, with strong impact to guarantee Food Safety and to prevent risks against Public Health; someone who promotes, and apply, One Health approach to decrease the risk of zoonosis, food-borne diseases and antimicrobial resistance; a professional with increasing social functions as analyser, instructor, advisor, evaluator.

Could we ask you a few personal questions as well?

Tell us about a project or accomplishment that you consider to be the most significant in your career.

Honestly I'm satisfied with my career. I'm not ambitious. For me it is fine to keep my level of teaching and research.

What was the biggest mistake you've made in your life and how have you overcome it?

Most probably my biggest mistake was to have only one son. Now it is late to overcome it.

What were you doing the last time you looked at a clock and realized you had lost all track of time?

In August 2014, the week I was walking "The way" (making reference to St. James Way) from Lugo to Santiago with my husband; a wonderful experience.

Describe someone outside your field of interest who inspires you and why?

I'm not a person of idols but I admire people around me that fight against cancer or terrible diseases. These are my heroes.

What book do you think everyone should read?

"Le petit prince" a masterpiece of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.



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