

Acupuncture founded on magical and mystical musings about how the world works — A reply

Dear Sir:

Before responding to the letter from Drs. Ramey, Imrie, and Bowles, I hesitated several moments in deciding whether a response to a deliberately inflammatory letter of this kind was indeed merited. However, I feel I owe it to my profession to make the following points.

To begin with, I must admit taking offense to the statement, "The only constant seems to be the propensity of acupuncture proponents to misrepresent the facts," which, in my opinion, is extremely disrespectful on the part of one veterinary colleague to another. I might ask what the purpose is in footnoting an article with reference materials, if the author of such an article is to be criticized as being deliberately dishonest. It is entirely fair to express a difference of opinion amongst colleagues, but I would ask the correspondents to refrain from delivering an insult instead.

The correspondents do make an important point on the subject of scientific evidence, or lack thereof. Most veterinary practitioners, educated in conventional medicine and placing the safety and welfare of their patients above all else, would agree upon the importance of having this evidence. In the textbook "Complementary and Alternative Veterinary Medicine," Wynn and Schoen address many of the controversies surrounding this subject (1). Drs. Ramey, Imrie, and Bowles would do well to read this material. For example, Wynn and Schoen suggest that if one were to look at the quality of the research in conventional medicine, it might soften the criticism of research in traditional Chinese medicine. They make the point that it is well known that there are many deficiencies in our knowledge of conventional medicine and lack of research support for many popular techniques used in everyday practice. David Eddy of Duke University has claimed that only 15% of medical interventions are actually supported by strong science and that only 1% of published medical articles are scientifically sound (2). One other point, as far as the idea that

acupuncture works by placebo, I would have thought it was obvious that its beneficial effects on animals would immediately preclude this argument.

I agree with the correspondents that every effort must be made to support studies in all aspects of veterinary medicine, including the field of veterinary acupuncture. At this time, I feel practitioners are doing the best they can with the knowledge that they have and with the results and feedback that they have received from owners and patients. There are several thousand veterinarians around the world currently using acupuncture with beneficial results. Thus, there are countless satisfied owners. I have been treating with this modality for the past 5 years and have been thrilled with the results I see. I can truly say that I am improving my patients' quality of life. Can Drs. Ramey, Imrie, and Bowles refute this fact? Let us not forget that aspirin was used for many years to improve patients' quality of life, without scientific knowledge of its mechanism of action.

In summary, I believe that veterinarians try to do the best for their patients. If acupuncture helps without hurting, shouldn't we welcome its use and make every effort to explore it, rather than criticize and ignore it!

*Helaine Haltrecht, DMV
Clinique vétérinaire Dorval
307, avenue Dorval
Dorval, Quebec H9S 3H6*

References

1. Wynn SG, Schoen AM. Fundamentals of complementary and alternative veterinary medicine. In: Schoen AM, Wynn SG, eds. *Complementary and Alternative Veterinary Medicine — Principles and Practice*. St. Louis: Mosby 1998: 3–20.
2. Smith R. Where is wisdom? *Brit Med J* 1991; 303: 798 (cited in reference 1).



Thoughts for a friend

Dear Sir:

Many CVMA members will have had the opportunity to deal with Barry Sproule at Pottruff & Smith. Barry is a person with an infectious sense of humor and the ability to make those around him feel good about themselves. He enjoys people and life in general. More than that, Barry has a great grasp of the insurance industry and always puts the best interests of CVMA members first.

A few months ago, Barry lost his voice. More recently, with other symptoms starting to appear, it has finally been confirmed that he has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). You will recognize this as Lou Gehrig's disease. Barry wants his friends and clients to know this, so

that they won't feel that he has been derelict in his responsibilities to them.

I visited with him recently and, true to form, he remains upbeat and positive. He told me that every day is a blessing and every friend a treasure. I know that he would appreciate a card or letter: c/o Pottruff & Smith Insurance Brokers Inc, 8001 Weston Road, Suite 300, Woodbridge, Ontario L4L 9C8; or you can e-mail him direct at barrysproule@acncanada.net.

*Tom Sanderson, DVM
RR#3
Hanover, Ontario N4N 3B9*