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## VetCare is Committed to Staff Continued Education

VetCare is committed to training and educating our staff. In an effort to formalize our continuing education program we have recently developed an internal CE Calendar with topics we hope our nurses will find informative and practical. We feel that standardized classes will help lead to greater uniformity in staff nursing technique and help

us to continue to provide top notch patient care. Our overall goal is to provide in-house CE for technicians to increase awareness of issues in patient care, increase patient comfort, and improve monitoring of critical patients and anesthetic cases.

Additionally, we have linked CE attendance to our employee evaluation process to encourage staff to: at-

tend internal and external CE, and to help us develop our CE program. As a result of this change we have seen a rise in CE attendance. In the near future we hope to be able to open up some of our classes to technicians working at local community veterinary hospitals.

### VetCare Offers Medical Laparoscopy

**Barry Kipperman DVM, DACVIM**  
**VetCare Specialist Care Center**

Our internal medicine service is proud to now offer rigid laparoscopy for your patients. Laparoscopy provides magnified visualization of most of the abdominal organs, including liver, gall bladder, pancreas, bile duct, peritoneum, and abdominal lymph nodes.

The most common indications for this procedure would be patients in need of liver, intestinal and/or pancreatic biopsies. Patients with undiagnosed ascites also benefit from this procedure, as diffuse diseases such as neoplasia and FIP can be confirmed via biopsy.

Cats with cholangiohepatitis and/or pancreatitis are ideal candidates for laparoscopic biopsies. Advantages over ultrasound-guided procedures include true visualization of areas being biopsied, larger, more diagnostic samples, and minimal risks of post-biopsy bleeding due to ability to apply pressure and local hemostasis.

Advantages of laparoscopy over routine surgical laparotomy include more rapid patient recovery, less pain and shorter hospital stay. Feel free to call me if you wish to find out more about how your patients may benefit from this procedure.

### 2004 Continuing Education Calendar

<b>January</b>	Heart & Lung exam
<b>February</b>	Blood pressure
<b>March</b>	Breathing I: Oximetry & Capnography
<b>April</b>	Breathing II: Blood Gases and Ventilatory management
<b>May</b>	Analgesia I: Physiology of pain, recognition of pain, commonly seen diseases and pain syndromes associated with these diseases.
<b>June</b>	Analgesia II: Therapy for pain and monitoring pain therapies (Opiates, NSAIDS, adjunctive analgesics, nursing care)
<b>August</b>	Anesthetic drugs & adjunctive drugs; Nursing care of the anesthetized patient
<b>September</b>	Critical care & anesthesia: GDV, Peritonitis, GI obstructions
<b>October</b>	Critical care & anesthesia: Hemoabdomen
<b>November</b>	Critical care & anesthesia: FLUTD
<b>December</b>	Critical care & anesthesia: Thoracotomy

# Interesting Toxicity of the Month

## by Dr. Keri Smyrni

Neurotoxins can be produced by molds that grow in rich moist media such as fallen walnuts or almonds or even garbage.

Kodi, a 10 month old male neutered Peke-a-Poo, presented to VetCare for acute generalized tremors with no other reportable clinical signs. Physical exam revealed moderate generalized tremors. Remaining physical exam was unremarkable.

Differential diagnosis included the following toxins: tremorigenic mycotoxins (neurotoxins that are produced by molds that grow in rich moist media such as fallen walnuts or almonds or even in garbage), metaldehyde, strychnine, ethylene glycol, cholinesterase inhibitors, methyl-xanthines, pseudoephedrine and amphetamines. Kodi's owner reported no

exposure to the above toxins. However, Kodi ingested the household birds's food containing peanuts 4 hours prior to the start of the tremors.

Given the known ingestion of the peanuts, I made a tentative diagnosis of moldy peanut (tremorigenic mycotoxin) ingestion leading to generalized tremors. Ingestion of the mold releases the toxin that causes muscular activity similar to strychnine and metaldehyde, and signs can be seen within 2 hours after ingestion. Mold ingestion in low quantities may cause muscle tremors lasting hours or days.

Definitive diagnosis of moldy peanut ingestion re-

quires analysis by mass spectrometry. I offered diagnostic testing to rule out other non-toxic etiologies. The only testing approved by the owner was a lateral abdominal radiograph which revealed a moderate amount of ingesta.

Gastric lavage was recommended, but declined by the owner. The owner approved supportive care which included intravenous fluids, robaxin and toxiban. Tremors dramatically improved after receiving 4 doses of 44 mg/kg Robaxin IV. Tremors completely ceased after the following 4 hours. Intravenous fluids were tapered overnight and Kodi was discharged.

## Dublin — St. Patrick's Day Celebration!

By Jerri Brodie

In the past I have greeted the Dublin St. Patrick's Day Festival with a less than an enthusiastic attitude. The festival meant battling the public to keep parking open for our emergency clients and guiding anxious owners to VetCare around blocked streets.

When our hospital decided to host a booth at the festival this year, I volunteered to help staff it hoping to see things from a different perspective. I'm happy to say that my hopes were granted. The weather was warm — almost too warm as we settled in to meet some of our neighbors and let them know that

VetCare was nearby and ready to help care for any needs their pets might have.

At the festival I met two distinct groups of people; those who had no idea we existed and those who had come to us for care in the past. People were very receptive to us, and many people gladly took the magnets and brochures we offered.

The highlight of the event was getting to hear the many stories people relayed to us of how we had helped their beloved animal friend. I was amazed by the number of people who stopped by just to say thank you. At the close of the day, I felt physically tired but emotionally refreshed.



# Thinking about Continuing Education for your Practice Manager?

**Susan Hatch, BS**  
**VetCare Practice Manager**

As a veterinary management professional, I decided to update my credentials by attending a graduate level veterinary management program. I chose the AAHA, VMI program because it offers in depth courses that focus on human resource, finance, marketing and strategic planning. Additionally, this program came highly recommended by members of an emergency/specialty management group to which I belong.

The VMI program is based at Purdue University and attendees can choose to take the course in sequence over two years or attend sessions out of sequence but finish within seven months. Recently, I attended the second module: Finance. I found the topic and content of this module to be interesting and challenging. The pre-reading assignments

introduced the language and theory of finance and the lectures and group sessions focused on learning how to think about a veterinary business as a financial investment.

The benefit of the program varied slightly for each of us based in part on our position: business owner, associate veterinarian, manager, consultant, or support staff. For the veterinarian looking to start, build, buy or sell a practice, the program provided real standards that could be applied to setting up, evaluating or valuing a veterinary practice. The program also helped by showing us how to determine which report we needed to look at in order to answer specific financial questions as well as how to utilize the reports to create business strategies for future growth. Last, when looking at reports showing the net profit we were shown that it is not

enough to have a positive net profit, instead you need to take your analysis further and look at whether you are achieving the appropriate return on your investment.

At the close of the session we were all thinking about how the information we had received could be utilized to help our practices. In speaking with others in the evening at the hospitality suite it was interesting to hear people put together plans for evaluating their practices. Additionally, I looked forward to returning to VetCare and looking at our company financials utilizing some of the tools and terminology learned through the VMI program. I hope that by becoming more familiar with looking at VetCare from a financial investment approach I will be better able to help VetCare to grow in a fiscally responsible way.

The Financial Module was a challenging and rewarding learning opportunity!



## Guinea Pig Rescue Attains Non-Profit Status

VetCare Registered Veterinary Technician, Sharlene Scheffer has been rescuing guinea pigs for over 10 years. Up until a few weeks ago, the 150+ guinea pigs were solely supported by Sharlene and a very occasional donor. After hundreds of pages of applications, forms and a hefty filing fee, Cavy World Guinea Pig Rescue is now an official 501©3 non-profit organiza-

tion. It is believed that this is the only non-profit guinea pig rescue in California, and one of only a handful in the country.

Cavy World started with a few unwanted guinea pigs from a local shelter and is now home to nearly 200 of the adorable fuzzballs. Aside from shelters & animal control seizures the unwanted guinea pigs also come from

individuals and families that decide they can no longer take care of their pets, some due to medical problems. The healthiest of the guinea pigs are put up for adoption. Those not adoptable spend the rest of their lives at Cavy World as cherished pets. If you are interested in learning more about Cavy World or guinea pigs, call Sharlene at (510) 699-1704.



Sharlene & Chumley the guinea pig.



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## Employee Highlight — Faith Hoffman

By Amy Chionis

Faith Hoffman is an East Coaster with the manners and grace to prove it. She has worked with us for two years, primarily as an Internal Medicine Nurse, and has recently “branched out” as an Emergency and Critical Care Lead Nurse. To hear Faith tell it, she specializes in “little dogs” as typified by her family: George and Kayla, miniature pinschers (a.k.a. very tiny, hungry people), and Mitzi, an American Eskimo. Faith’s ability to connect with her patients is exemplified by the fact that if anyone in the hospital can get a sick animal to eat, it’s Faith. She possesses a very special gift of matching compassionate, sensible care with technical smarts. Not just a great veterinary nurse, Faith is an accomplished musician, writer and cook. She keeps VetCare team members going with her wicked confections and upbeat energy. Patients are lucky to have Faith as a VetCare nurse.



Left to right: Amy Choinis, Dr. Kipperman, “Clancy-Gordon” and Faith Hoffman, celebrating Dr. K’s birthday.