

The History of the American College of Veterinary Anesthesiologists

The development of veterinary medical specialty disciplines with certifying colleges has made great strides over the past several years. Veterinary anesthesiology has become one of these specialty colleges because of the emphasis placed on developing new information and fulfilling obligations of the specialty to the veterinary profession. Veterinary anesthesiology has shared in the benefits of other specialties in veterinary medicine as well as the development of anesthesiology and intensive care as major specialty areas in human medicine. The present position and development of the American College of Veterinary Anesthesiologists (ACVA) is the result of extensive efforts on the part of numerous individuals. Many of these people are now Diplomates of the ACVA. Practitioners, industrial veterinarians, and others have made valuable contributions to the development of the ACVA. Other colleagues in human anesthesiology have kindly contributed time, advice, and encouragement to our endeavors.

The status of the veterinary anesthesiology, and the evolutionary needs for a specialty group, received casual interest during the early to mid-1960's. During the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) meeting in Boston in 1968, Drs. Larry Soma and Charles Short met and discussed the existing situation of organized veterinary anesthesiology. They concluded that the number of veterinarians devoting full-time efforts to anesthesiology was insufficient to support a specialty organization of veterinary anesthesiology. During the same meeting, Dr. Short met with Henry Beecher, MD, of the Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Beecher reviewed the history of medical anesthesia specialization and offered encouragement in future efforts to establish a veterinary anesthesia specialty.

During the 1960's and early 1970's, a number of human anesthesiologists made it possible for some of the founding Charter Diplomates of the ACVA to participate in

their programs and to learn about the development of new anesthetic drugs and techniques being used in human anesthesia. Among these physicians were Robert Dripps, MD, University of Pennsylvania (instrumental in the training program of Dr. Larry Soma), Arthur Keats, MD, Baylor University College of Medicine (with whom Dr. Charles Short worked), Drs. Mort Shulman and Max Sadolv and other physicians at the University of Illinois (with whom Dr. John Thurmon worked), and Edmond I. Eger, MD and other physicians at the University of California Medical College (with whom Drs. Donald Sawyer and Eugene Steffey worked). Drs. E. Wynn "Ginger" Jones (Oklahoma State University) and William Lumb (Colorado State University) made some of the earliest contributions to the development of veterinary anesthesiology in the United States, working with graduate students at their respective institutional locations. During the early years, Dr. Jerry Gillespie made significant contributions to the development of veterinary anesthesiology as reflected by his work in respiratory function of anesthetized horses. He had previously received training in a medical school program.

Even though there were focal areas of interest in anesthesiology by faculty at both veterinary colleges and in research laboratories within medical schools, it was not until 1970 that a major thrust was directed at organizing veterinarians who were spending a major portion of their professional time in veterinary anesthesiology. Initially, a society with open membership seemed appropriate in order to encourage those with an interest in veterinary anesthesiology to participate. The first organizational meeting for the development of a specialty in veterinary anesthesiology was held in conjunction with the AVMA convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 1970. Over 40 veterinarians attended the meeting called into session by Dr. Charles Short. This resulted in organization of the American Society of Veterinary Anesthesiologists (ASVA). From this group, the first officers were selected. They were Drs. Charles Short, Donald Sawyer, William Lumb, Larry Soma, and Dan Roberts. It was the purpose of this group to coordinate the interest of all those wishing to organize and develop the specialty of veterinary anesthesiology. We had as our primary goal to improve anesthetic techniques and to disseminate knowledge when and wherever

possible in our profession. It was not necessary to be a full-time veterinary anesthesiologist to belong to the ASVA. Furthermore, it was clear that a category of membership for technical support personnel was essential. The original organization was designed expressly to promote dissemination of information on the subject of veterinary anesthesia irrespective of individual training or background. Of major interest was the selection of individuals from this group to speak at the ASVA and other organizational meetings (e.g., ACVA, AAHA, AAEP, etc.). We wanted to be visible in all veterinary organizations. Further, we felt that it was absolutely essential that we be visible and vigilant in our support of the AVMA and particularly the annual convention. After all, the AVMA had shown strong support of our efforts even though the specialties of veterinary surgery and medicine (rather well established) were reluctant to provide the same level of encouragement. As the program developed, publication of articles on veterinary anesthesiology seemed in order. Dr. Bruce Heath of Colorado State University was instrumental in establishing this journal. Dr. Heath accepted his duties seriously and worked tirelessly in meeting publication deadlines.

During the ensuing five years the ASVA, through the direction of its officers, its working members and an Ad Hoc Committee appointed by the ASVA President Larry Soma in 1971, were dedicated to the establishment of the ACVA. Dr. Soma appointed Dr. John Thurman, University of Illinois, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee. Other members of the Committee included: Dr. Jerry Gillespie (University of California, presently at Kansas State University), Dr. E. Wynn Jones (Oklahoma State University, presently at Mississippi State University), Dr. William Lumb (Colorado State University, retired), Dr. Charles Short (University of Missouri, presently at Cornell University), Dr. Donald Sawyer (Michigan State University). Dr. John Thurman appointed Dr. Charles Short and Donald Sawyer as liaison to the AVMA and the medical profession.

The AVMA had subsequently established guidelines for selection of founding charter diplomates of specialty organizations. There were four specific requirements, at least one of which must be met in order to follow AVMA guidelines. The original Committee

members insisted that founding charter Diplomates of the ACVA meet all four of these requirements, including ten years of active service in the specialty, significant publications, sufficient training, head of anesthesiology type of program, and spending a major portion of one's professional time in anesthesia or a closely related subject area. Seven veterinarians were found to meet these qualifications. This group would later become the founding Diplomates of the ACVA.

Between 1970 and 1975, the constitution and bylaws of various other specialties were studied by the Committee. A liaison person, William Eggers, MD, Chairman of Anesthesiology at the University of Missouri Medical School, was enlisted to assist in the development of our college. William Levy, MD, a human anesthesiologist, also devoted considerable time and effort assisting us in founding the ACVA. Organizational meetings were frequent, held often in conjunction with the AVMA, the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) and the ASVA annual meetings. A constitution and bylaws were finally developed by the ACVA Ad Hoc Committee. The AVMA was asked to recognize the new group in 1973. During 1973 to 1975 much effort went into the approval process. In spite of strong efforts by all the Ad Hoc Committee members and tentative approval by the AVMA Council on Education in 1973, the decision was reversed and additional work was required. Movements were made to include anesthesia as part of internal medicine or surgery. The members of the AVMA council on education were again contacted. All delegates and alternate delegates to the AVMA were contacted as the "stubborn seven" held out for separate college status. The Committee members continued their work while debating, among themselves, if there would ever be an ACVA. Their hard work finally paid dividends. In 1975, the AVMA Council on Education finally recommended preliminary approval of the ACVA. This was confirmed by the AVMA House of Delegates' meeting in Anaheim, California, on Sunday, July 13, 1975, at 10:10 am PCT. We had won and were elated because we knew that all we needed to establish a sound specialty of anesthesiology was an opportunity. Thus, the ACVA was officially established in North America for the first time.

Of enormous importance throughout this process were the insight and efforts of Drs. William Lumb and E. Wynn "Ginger" Jones. They were able to greatly assist in our endeavors to establish the ACVA not only because of their experience with the ACVS but because of their sincere interest in the sound principles of veterinary anesthesiology. The ACVA should always be grateful to these two outstanding individuals for their efforts on behalf of the ACVA.

In order to avoid overlooking anyone who might be qualified as a charter Diplomate for the ACVA, notice was served to all colleges of veterinary medicine and to members of the ASVA. We encouraged people to participate. We wanted to make it clear that if anyone believed they met the established criteria for Diplomate status, we were interested in examining their credentials. They were asked to send their credentials to Dr. John Thurmon who was Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee. After notices had gone out, 55 veterinarians submitted their credentials for membership as charter diplomates of the ACVA. The founding Committee reviewed the credentials of all these individuals at their first official board meeting in Corpus Christi, Texas, February, 1975. Fourteen applicants were found to meet requirements as established by the AVMA and these persons were granted charter diplomacy. Ten other applicants were judged to have met part of the requirements and were given the opportunity to become charter diplomates by oral examination only. All ten were invited to appear for oral examination to be given in conjunction with the ACVS annual meeting at the Surgical Forum in Chicago, Illinois, October, 1976. Five of the applicants completed the examination successfully. Two additional applicants were given the option of taking both a written and oral examination for diplomacy even though they had not completed formal training in anesthesiology. This was granted because of the number of years and efforts they had worked in their respective colleges with part-time association in anesthesiology. Both elected not to take the examination. The process of both written and oral certifying examinations was officially started in 1977.

The original ACVA officers included: Dr. John Thurmon as the first President, Dr. E. Wynn Jones, President-Elect, Dr. Lawrence R. Soma, Vice-President and Chairman of the original Examination Committee, Dr. Donald Sawyer, Representative to the AVMA, Dr. William Lumb and Jerry Gillespie as members of the Board of Directors, and Dr. Charles Short, Executive Secretary and Treasurer of the new organization.

Probationary approval required appropriate submission of various forms and information according to AVMA guidelines given to the new organization following the AVMA annual convention in Anaheim, California, July, 1975. The founding Diplomates of the ACVA attended to organizational details. They were assigned the task of establishing sound residency training programs in their respective veterinary colleges. Some were residency programs without graduate degrees while others required completion of graduate studies and a degree. As a result, by the time probational approval was given, the specialty as organized by the founding Diplomates has established training programs that were beyond the original seven's expectations. From 1975 to 1980 the organization grew and developed training programs of continuing education, programs in self-improvement, and programs for testing and certification of new diplomate. Along with the residency training programs came new faculty positions for trained veterinary anesthesiologists. By 1980, the College was ready to seek full accreditation by the AVMA. This effort was headed Dr. Eugene Steffey, President of the ACVA at that time. Approval was granted by the AVMA and from 1980 to 1990, the ACVA has continued to grow, mature, and prosper. The current organization has national and international recognition and influence.

Throughout development of the ACVA, certain ideals and goals were ever present and we still hold to these fundamental principles. Anesthesiology is a service-oriented specialty. It is vital to the well-being of all animals requiring medications and procedures to prevent or alleviate pain and suffering. It plays a crucial role in veterinary medicine. Anesthesiologists have always recognized and respected their role in providing quality anesthesia service to animal patients, as well as their

responsibility for instructing veterinary students. They accept their responsibility to practitioners and the origination and conduction of research designed to improve knowledge of the discipline. We should always pursue the opportunity to speak and publish on the subject of anesthesia. The founding charter Diplomates, as others who followed, have demonstrated these principles through clinical service, lectures, publication of journal articles and textbooks, research, and providing residency training. The founders are pleased to have had the opportunity to play a role in the establishment of the existing ACVA.

They intend to continue contributing their services to aid in the future development of our specialty when wherever they can. Veterinary anesthesiology must continue to be a caring discipline that devotes itself to relieving pain and suffering of animals. Therein lies the opportunity to improve animal welfare and our own self image as veterinary anesthesiologists.

Respectfully submitted:

Charles E. Short, DVM, MS, DACVA

John C. Thurmon, DVM, MS, DACVA