

Curricular transformation at St Petersburg State Academy of Veterinary Medicine

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Abstract

Collaboration between InterNICHE and the Department of Pharmacology at St Petersburg State Veterinary Academy in Russia began in 2005 following alternatives promotion by InterNICHE at veterinary congresses and across Russia. Demonstration and loan of alternatives, along with presentations and meetings with Academy officials, teachers and students, led to great interest in humane teaching approaches. Economic considerations and a recognition of the importance of computer literacy also played a role in an openness to new and modern teaching methods. With support from the International Association Against Painful Experiments on Animals (IAAPEA) a multimedia laboratory was established and InterNICHE provided computer software and a training mannekin. Further material to support successful implementation of the learning tools was produced by InterNICHE and the department, including a translated version of pharmacology software and a manual on its use. The annual use of over 1000 animals in the department was ended and a formal agreement was signed to confirm the transformation. Widespread media coverage across former Soviet countries demonstrated that change and innovation had brought major benefits to the educational process. Visits and donations to other departments, and a recognition of the benefits of humane education has now led to virtually the whole Academy abandoning animal experiments. A conflict between progress at the Academy and outdated demands for animal use from the Russian government's Academic Methodology Unit is being addressed.

Introduction

Since meeting teachers during outreach and alternatives promotion at veterinary congresses and across in Russia during 2005, InterNICHE has been working with the Department of Pharmacology and other departments at St Petersburg State Veterinary Academy. Demonstrations and loan of alternatives, along with presentations and meetings with Academy officials, teachers and students, has led to a great interest in humane teaching approaches. Economic considerations and a recognition of the importance of computer literacy have also played a role in an openness to new and modern teaching methods.

Investment and implementation

With support from the International Association Against Painful Experiments on Animals (IAAPEA), a multimedia laboratory was established at the Department of Pharmacology. InterNICHE provided a range of computer software and a critical care canine mannekin. Further material, including a translated version of pharmacology software and a user's manual, was produced by InterNICHE and the department to support successful implementation of the learning tools.

Results and discussion

The annual use of over 1000 animals in the department was ended, and a formal agreement was signed to confirm the transformation. Widespread media coverage across Russia and other former Soviet countries explored how change and innovation had brought major benefits to the educational process. Visits and donations to other departments, and a recognition of the benefits of humane education has now led to virtually the whole Academy abandoning animal experiments in education across the departments. A conflict between progress at the Academy and outdated demands for animal use from the Russian government's Academic Methodology Unit is being addressed through careful negotiation by the Faculty.



Conclusion

The InterNICHE approach of exploring opportunities for collaboration led to widespread replacement and the implementation of alternatives in one department. Academy officials, teachers and students could see the multiple advantages of humane education over animal experiments. This progress was followed by other departments, once curricular transformation was demonstrated as feasible and advantageous. With almost the whole Academy now having subscribed to replacement methods in education and training, the evolution of a small project into a major success story demonstrates the power of building partnership on common ground and effective targeting of resources.

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References

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