



Alternatives Outreach and a New Student Movement for Humane Veterinary Education and Practice in Egypt

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Summary

Extended outreach by InterNICHE within Egypt has led to significant faculty interest in alternatives and the founding of a new student movement for humane veterinary education and practice. The 1st North Africa and Middle East Seminar on Alternatives in Education and Training was held in Cairo in February 2010 and produced a resolution for full replacement of harmful animal use. This event was followed by over 40 InterNICHE presentations and meetings with faculty and students. Negotiations with the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Cairo University addressed the potential for replacement by innovative alternative methods such as training mannekins and advanced software. The student organisation Cairo University Vets for Alternatives (CUVA) was established through student self-organisation, with a vision of enhanced education and training using replacement alternatives. Membership of CUVA includes over 450 students and junior teachers, facilitated by social networking. As well as organising debates, a clinical rotations workgroup has developed collaborative projects with shelters and veterinary outreach organisations to help animal patients in cities and villages. These initiatives address the concerns by animal campaigners, shelter owners and the students themselves at the significant lack of practical experience and animal welfare awareness often shown by veterinary graduates. Clinical experience can also potentially replace killing and animal experiments within clinical skills and surgery training. The Egyptian revolution beginning February 2011 gave rise to many welfare challenges for animals, particularly horses and camels, following the disruption to tourism. A month-long outreach project with CUVA involvement provided targeted animal care. The empowerment achieved through CUVA's establishment and activity has now led to a focus that reaches beyond alternatives, with a new awareness of the role of the veterinarian in a wide range of animal care issues.

Keywords: alternatives, animal experiments, education, veterinary, Egypt

1 Introduction

A regional seminar on alternatives and an extended series of presentations and meetings with Egyptian universities, organisations and campaigners were held in Egypt from February to May 2010. This widespread outreach aimed to explore potential alliances with teachers, students and others concerning the implementation of humane education and replacement alternatives. A student movement for humane veterinary education and practice evolved out of this activity and continues to have an impact.

2 Regional seminar on alternatives

The 1st North Africa and Middle East Seminar on Alternatives in Education and Training was held in February 2010 in Cairo, Egypt. Organised by InterNICHE and the Egyptian Society of Animal Friends (ESAF), the initiative built on the experience of InterNICHE outreach tours and alternatives demonstrations

by dovetailing the organisation's collective skills and resources with the initiatives and local knowledge of campaigners and teachers in the host country (Jukes et al., 2011). The seminar brought together teachers, students, researchers, veterinary professionals, campaigning organisations and others from 24 countries across North Africa, the Middle East and other areas to learn about replacement alternatives.

InterNICHE Co-ordinator Nick Jukes introduced the range and quality of alternatives, and explained the organisation's commitment to the 1R of replacement to help guarantee ethical and effective acquisition of knowledge and skills (Jukes and Martinsen, 2008; Jukes and Chiuiua, 2003). Neurosurgeon Dr Emad Aboud from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and Swaida National Hospital in Syria explained the advantages of surgery training using perfused cadavers (Aboud et al., 2004). Veterinarian Dr Fawzy Elnady from Cairo University addressed information and communications technology in relation to alternatives. Discussing plastination and software production too, he demonstrated the *beta* version of a new camel anatomy DVD funded through the InterNICHE



Fig. 1: North Africa and the Middle East

Humane Education Award grant program. A number of other Egyptian teachers and researchers also described their interest in and use of alternatives.

InterNICHE National Contacts also presented: Snehal Bhavsar from India described her strategies for catalysing curricular change across the state of Gujarat, including her success in achieving up to 80% reduction of animal use in education (Bhavsar and Jukes, 2009). In absentia, Dr Sofia Ponce from Mexico presented the vision and strategies of campaigners in Latin America, and Dr Siri Martinsen from Norway explained the rationale for seeing caring as an essential clinical skill which must be placed at the heart of veterinary and medical training (Martinsen, 2008).

Delegates also attended the subsequent *2nd Middle East Network for Animal Welfare (MENAW) Conference*, and the veterinarians present participated in clinical skills training that included an exploration of innovative teaching approaches and hands-on experience of software, models, mannequins, and simulators.

3 Resolution for full replacement

The resolution passed unanimously at the seminar recognised the pedagogical, ethical, environmental, and economic advantages of humane alternatives over harmful animal use in education and training, and called for full replacement. In an acknowledgement of the commonality between religions in the region, the resolution also recognised the imperatives within Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and secular ethical thought that support respect for life and the implementation of alternatives.

Cairo, 27th February 2010

Resolution

We the participants:

1. Recognise that animals are sentient beings and that life in all its forms should be fully respected
2. Recognise the pedagogical, ethical, environmental and economic advantages of humane and innovative alternatives over harmful animal use (animal experimentation and the dissection of purpose-killed animals) in life science education and training
3. Recognise the imperatives within Islam, Christianity, Judaism and secular ethical thought that support respect for life and the replacement of harmful animal use with alternatives
4. Join the global movement for humane education and call for full replacement of harmful animal use with alternatives
5. Call on North African and Middle Eastern governments, academic councils and educational institutes to work towards removing harmful animal use from the life science syllabus, to develop and implement appropriate and effective laws, regulations and guidelines to bring about replacement, and to provide support for the implementation of alternatives

The 2nd MENAW Conference endorsed the seminar resolution, extending it to cover all religions and belief systems.

4 Further outreach

Following the seminar, conference, and veterinary training, over 40 presentations and meetings were held during further InterNICHE outreach activity across the country. Facilitated by Sherif El Hayawan, a campaigner who organises veterinary outreach convoys, visits were made to the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Cairo University, and later to the University of Benha at Moshtohor.

An important meeting was held with 4 sheikhs from the highly influential Al-Azhar Mosque and University to discuss humane education, to demonstrate alternatives and to ask their opinion about full replacement. Another meeting was held with repre-

sentatives of Dar al-Ifta al-Misriyyah, the institute established for Islamic legal research. Within Islam there is great potential for arguing for animal welfare, compassion and mercy, and indeed for replacement. The existing fatwas (Islamic judgments) on the subject of animal use do not, however, reflect an awareness of modern alternatives. One fatwa does nevertheless call specifically for the protection of the frog, an animal that is used widely in education in Egypt.

5 Cairo University

InterNICHE outreach to faculty and students at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Cairo University included over 15 lectures and demonstrations of alternatives given to hundreds of students. Further meetings were held with the Dean, vice-Dean, Heads of Department, and those responsible for quality control



Fig. 2: Meeting and demonstration of alternatives with sheikhs at Al-Azhar Mosque, Cairo



Fig. 3: Meeting and demonstration of alternatives with Deans and Heads of Department at Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Cairo University



Fig. 4: Lecture and demonstration to students at Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Cairo University



Fig. 5: Trial of alternatives by students at Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Cairo University



to investigate the possibility of replacement in practical classes across the syllabus. Despite widespread animal use, the Faculty was open to the continued InterNICHE presence, and the message of alternatives reached the whole Faculty.

Despite initial scepticism from some teachers, and little awareness about alternatives from both teachers and students, the learning tools from the InterNICHE Alternatives Loan System impressed all parties (Perčić et al., 2008). Particularly popular was the Virtual Canine Anatomy DVD, the Glass Horse DVD for anatomy and clinical skills training, and the Critical Care Jerry dog mannekin with heart and breath sounds simulator. These learning tools demonstrated that innovation and technology could play a major role in improving the quality of veterinary education and training and better meeting standards – as well as helping to replace the killing of animals and many severe experiments (Martinsen and Jukes, 2005).

6 Student movement founded

Many students were keenly aware of the need to enhance the quality of veterinary education and training, and very concerned about the harmful animal use present throughout the degree. Following the initial presentations at the Faculty, InterNICHE proposed that they establish an organisation to support curricular transformation. Cairo University Vets for Alternatives (CUVA) was founded in March 2010 by 4th year students for this purpose. With its own Policy reflecting the *InterNICHE Policy on the Use of Animals and Alternatives in Education and Training* (Martinsen and Jukes, 2008b), CUVA defined itself not just as an organisation but as a project dedicated to full replacement, the implementation of alternatives, and a positive vision of the profession.

The CUVA founders expressed an intellectual and experiential clarity concerning their education and training: not only that animal experiments and dissections of purpose killed animals

have limited pedagogical benefits and provide negative lessons from a hidden curriculum, but also that crucial skills in veterinary treatment and care were not being developed at all. There is a lack of interest and investment in education in Egypt. Coupled with the practice of harmful animal use and the limited availability of good learning tools and clinical experience, this leads to a lack of confidence and pride within the profession itself. The poor image of veterinarians in Egypt is reflected in the doubly pejorative term “donkey doctor”.

7 CUVA structure and activity

An Organising Committee (OC) of 10 active students began to manage the organisation, holding regular planning meetings to identify obstacles and opportunities and to build strategies for action. InterNICHE offered its vision, which was shared by CUVA, and provided guidance, context and resources. Free-ware alternatives were widely distributed to students. Several public meetings, whose organisation was facilitated by social networking, were full of critical debate about quality of education, the need for modern learning tools, and strategy. During InterNICHE lectures at the Faculty, CUVA would be offered a platform to introduce and explain the concept of alternatives in Arabic.

CUVA membership grew rapidly to over 450 students and junior teachers, becoming a force at the Faculty. Such a rapid growth was not without risks: the implicit threat to establishment power; the vulnerability of the students with regard to the granting of their degrees; the danger of being seen to be externally influenced; the risk of losing independence if making the organisation official; and the limited energy available from the OC to involve sufficiently all the members. For the first time some CUVA members conscientiously objected to an animal-based practical class, forcing its cancellation. Nevertheless, no major problems developed. This was no doubt



Fig. 6: Meeting with students to discuss establishment of student group at Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Cairo University



Fig. 7: CUVA public meeting on the banks of the Nile

helped by the promise of further international collaboration and the potential for donations of alternatives from InterNICHE to the Faculty.

8 Workgroups and clinics

Three workgroups helped progress CUVA's objectives. The publicity workgroup promoted the meetings and activities. The alternatives workgroup began to collate information on animal use and potential replacements, organise self-training in alternatives, and investigate the possibilities for Egyptian production of alternatives and the applied use of plastination technologies.

The workgroup on clinical rotations and body donation programs aimed to develop collaborative projects with organisations that run clinics and shelters and perform veterinary outreach. Such projects were designed to provide benefits to all parties. As well as providing new volunteers and skills to the organisations, the collaboration would expose students from the first grade onwards to the clinical and field environments, providing them with valuable experience through apprenticeship in practical animal care under professional supervision. Once sufficiently trained on non-animal alternatives, students could help perform sterilisation and other procedures on animal patients at shelters and join veterinary convoys providing animal care in villages across the country.

These initiatives address concerns by animal campaigners, shelter owners and the students themselves at the lack of practical experience and animal welfare awareness often shown by graduates. Although extra-curricular at first, it was hoped that such involvement in clinical practice could also help replace animal experiments within clinical skills and surgery training. InterNICHE defines clinical work with patients as an alternative, due to its replacement potential (Jukes and Martinsen, 2008). For this purpose, records of procedures performed and skills acquired by students would be kept. These would help demonstrate that therapeutic work with animal patients in the clinic and field

can not only better meet teaching objectives and successfully address the need to practice caring as a clinical skill, but also can obviate the negative lessons of the hidden curriculum presented by conventional animal use. These include the perceived "necessity" and "acceptability" of harming and killing.

Plans for potential body donation programs did not materialise, but had been explored as a way to connect animal guardians and the veterinary and shelter communities with faculties to provide animal cadavers that are "ethically sourced". InterNICHE defines ethically sourced cadavers, organs, and tissue as deriving from free-living animals who died naturally or in accidents, or who were euthanised secondary to terminal illness or serious non-recoverable injury (Martinsen and Jukes, 2008a). Body donation programs can provide these free resources to help replace the purpose-killing of animals in several disciplines.

9 Building alliances

Meetings were held to establish formal three-way relationships between CUVA, InterNICHE and organisations in Egypt regarding clinical rotations and body donation programs. The organisations were the Egyptian Society for Mercy to Animals (ESMA), the Society for the Protection of Animal Rights in Egypt (SPARE), Brooke Hospital for Animals, the Society for the Protection and Welfare of Donkeys and Mules in Egypt (SPWDME), and the projects of Sherif El Hayawan. All projects were to involve InterNICHE in order to keep the international connection and to help maintain the focus on ethics and replacement.

In a ground-breaking approach, InterNICHE and CUVA were able to transcend the territorial boundaries between Egyptian groups, and work together with many groups. The main power to achieve this lay in the fact that CUVA comprises young, enthusiastic future veterinarians who are clearly committed to animal welfare and willing to work with all existing groups rather than compete. Contracts were drafted to define the nature of the collaboration, specifying obligations for each party.

Although only some clinical practice opportunities were taken up, the trust and basic infrastructure established through the agreements with the other groups can be used for future CUVA projects. Indeed, the Egyptian revolution beginning February 2011 gave rise to a veterinary crisis which CUVA and other groups helped to resolve through major collaborative clinical work in the field.

CUVA was sufficiently established and had sufficient volunteers to have a presence in a number of important projects and events in 2010 and 2011. With a broad focus that covered alternative tools and approaches, animal care, and responsible companion animal guardianship, CUVA took its place alongside other groups. It contributed to the awareness events held at Giza Zoo; attended the Worldwide Anti-Whaling Day, which had Egyptian Government presence; conducted workshops with children at Egyptian Orphans Day; and celebrated the international World Animal Day alongside ESAF, ESMA, the Egyptian Mau Rescue Organisation (EMRO) and others.



Fig. 8: CUVA team at World Animal Day event, Cairo



10 Revolution and disaster relief

The Egyptian revolution gave rise to many welfare challenges for animals, particularly horses and camels, following the disruption to tourism and the loss of associated income for some Egyptians. The Nazlet El-Semman's Disaster Relief Project addressed this problem with a month-long outreach that provided targeted veterinary treatment and care to hundreds of neglected animals from March 2011. With volunteers co-ordinated by Dina Zulfikar from Animal Welfare Awareness Research (AWAR), the project involved Brooke Hospital for Animals, ESAF, Vier Pfofen, SPWDME, and CUVA. Both at the pyramids in Giza and at a second project in Luxor, CUVA played a significant and active role.

11 "Veterinary Uprising"

The "Veterinary Uprising" was a contemporaneous expression of the revolution at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Cairo University. A peaceful gathering of hundreds of students and junior teachers called on the establishment to instigate change across all departments and to provide a better future for students and veterinarians. This demand to change the curriculum was located within the broader revolutionary challenges to unquestioned convention and corruption. Encouraging critical thinking and a shift of attitudes, CUVA contributed to the demands by asserting the need for humane education and alternatives.

12 Discussion

The seminar and subsequent localised outreach provided opportunities to discuss major ethical and pedagogical issues, enabling many to articulate concerns in a field that had previously been considered "out of reach". With an awareness of the multi-

ple positive impact of alternative tools and approaches, the idea of humane education and clinical practice for students added a new focus for groups whose main activity usually concerns stray animals and shelters.

For the teachers, the outreach presented a range of innovative teaching tools that can clearly enhance the acquisition of knowledge and skills and that could represent a valuable investment in the university. The connections made with junior teachers demonstrated the interest in humane education and familiarity with technology that are associated with a new generation. For all stakeholders, InterNICHE offered direction and guidance in working to establish a fully humane education through the targeted approach of replacement with alternatives.

There has been a change of academic regime at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Cairo University, and officials and teachers now largely agree on the need for replacement. Some curricular changes have been made already. Analysis of animal use and of teaching objectives can be followed by identification of appropriate replacement alternatives, with possible funding support provided by InterNICHE.

CUVA now faces the challenge of re-organising and developing new strategies following the revolution and since the graduation, military service and the start of a career for many of the OC. The greatest potential rests in a two-fold approach: local and national. With all the OC having successfully graduated, CUVA needs to re-establish and maintain its connections at the Faculty, including better serving the membership and its interest in alternatives, and involving younger students in leadership roles.

CUVA can negotiate with the Faculty alongside InterNICHE concerning replacement of harmful animal use with alternative tools and with alternative approaches like clinical outreach, and can further develop its capacity to work independently. Nationally, there is potential to become a major force if it can expand its alternatives and clinical outreach work to include students and graduates in all governorates of Egypt.



Fig. 9: Veterinary care by CUVA and others at Nazlet El-Semman's Disaster Relief Project



Fig. 10: "Veterinary Uprising" at Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Cairo University



13 Conclusion

The skills and confidence gained through CUVA's establishment and activity have led to a new remit for the organisation that goes beyond alternatives and acknowledges the role of the veterinarian in a wide range of animal care issues.

Those involved in this new movement for alternatives and humane veterinary practice in Egypt are helping to reconnect the veterinary profession with the ethic of animal care and healing. This not only offers great potential for replacement in education and training, but it represents a shift in the animal welfare movement in the country, with a community of critical thinking, humane veterinarians now entering practice.

The InterNICHE outreach and work with CUVA form a case study of successful partnership and active engagement, with empowerment leading to the development of a bold and evolving vision and providing the confidence to help make it real.

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