

ANIMAL REHABILITATION

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

President's Report

Kirk Peck, PT, PhD, CSCS, CCRT

I hope your calendars are marked to attend the 2014 APTA Combined Sections Meeting in Las Vegas, NV. The ARSIG is sponsoring an exciting educational session on treating the canine thoracic spine by Laurie Edge Hughes, BScPT, MAnimSt (Animal Physio), CAFCI, CCRT. Those of you who know Laurie also know her presentations to be cutting edge and always delivered with a flare of personal humor.

In addition to the educational forum other important issues related to the future of animal practice by physical therapists and physical therapist assistants are slated on the SIG business meeting agenda so I encourage good attendance to stimulate productive dialogue. Topics for discussion include the development of ARSIG position statements; review/revise the ARSIG Mission, Purpose, Goals; review practice analysis survey data; SIG involvement in national educational opportunities; state legislative updates; and much more.

THE PULSE OF STATE LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES IS INCREASING

In recent months there has been a notable increase in proposed state legislative and regulatory language addressing physical therapy and animal rehabilitation. New Jersey, Kansas, and Nebraska all have active language proposals that will be addressed in the near future. In addition, the California Veterinary Medical Board will be holding a public hearing in January, 2014 on their proposed language to implement "direct supervision" for PTs who practice on animals. To support the PTs in California, the ARSIG will provide testimony during the scheduled hearing.

The recent increase in activity to codify language in various states has prompted a reflection on some key issues for ARSIG members to consider. First, if you serve as an ARSIG State Legislative Liaison then one of your duties in that role is to inform SIG officers of any potential legislative or regulatory language being proposed in your state. Generally speaking PTs who are directly involved in animal rehab are the first to learn about proposed language in respective states and thus serve a vitally important function. Think about it as being part of an "early alert" team to support the mission of the ARSIG, and ultimately the scope of animal practice for PTs and PTAs in all states.

As a nationally recognized organized body representing PTs and PTAs who treat animals, the ARSIG serves as a valuable resource for members who seek guidance in political negotiations, language review, and even testimonial support. In fact it is one of the SIG's primary goals as an organization to be involved in the political arena as appropriate. However, unless SIG officers become aware of such issues occurring in your state we can be of little help in the process. Not only does the ARSIG stand in support of animal rehab by PTs and PTAs but so does the Orthopaedic Section, and APTA in general through a House of Delegate position statement. So please recognize these valuable

resources and what they can offer by way of navigating often very murky waters when dealing with political entities.

THE ART OF POLITICAL COLLABORATION

Political debate and the power of negotiation and persuasion are probably some of the most difficult skills to acquire, and unfortunately the majority of physical therapists were not taught these skills during entry-level education. However, as stated in previous communications, PTs and PTAs practice "by law" so if we as practitioners desire to utilize the full extent of our education then we have no choice but to become politically involved at some level. In the case of negotiating legal rights to practice on animals, the rules of the game are still very rudimentary in comparison to the years of experience our profession has obtained negotiating language to treat humans. This fact alone is justification enough for the importance of the ARSIG and its role as a national entity to support a greater universal good versus just individual needs.

Some of you might be asking, "*What does he mean by a greater universal good?*" Funny you should ask. The Animal Rehabilitation SIG is an entity that was organized to serve the greater collective vs. focusing on just isolated desires or personal battles within states. If, however, certain state issues have political ramifications that could impact therapists in other states, then the ARSIG will take appropriate action. In practical terms this means I have just as much personal concern for the ability of PTs and PTAs to practice without burdensome stipulations in California as I do for therapists throughout the country. The California proposal in other words has national implications.

As a practicing PT I certainly have great concern over laws in my state impacting me on a personal level, but as President of the ARSIG, I must carry an added perspective. As an elected officer I have a duty and obligation to serve ALL SIG members in all states and to support a more unified mission to encourage and advance the practice of animal rehabilitation in such a way that maximizes the full potential and skills offered by PTs and PTAs. To fulfill this mission is to strive for greater continuity in legislative language that allows therapists to develop professional and collegial relationships with veterinarians and clients with some level of consistency across state borders. Yes, it would be wonderful if all states could share exactly the same legislative language and have it couched in all PT Practice Acts. However, that vision is an unrealistic dream filled with improbabilities. The reality is that language is currently being proposed from both sides of PT and Veterinary regulatory bodies, thus creating a great deal of confusion and inconsistency.

If there is a significant lack of continuity in the ability for PTs and PTAs to practice on animals in various states then a universal, or at least national, ability to provide quality care for animals will be fragmented and even chaotic to some degree; eg, your ability to practice on animals will vary greatly from state to state. The message I am trying to convey was best echoed by Blair Packard, PT, during his term as President of the Federation of State Boards in 2003. In an article published in

OPTP (2003) entitled, "Collaborative Practice Related to Treatment of Animals," Packard outlined the philosophy and need for collaborative language among the Regulatory Associations/Federations representing the Veterinary, Physical Therapy, and Chiropractic professions. In reference to forming a collaborative position statement on the relationship between veterinarians and non-veterinarians Packard stated,

"Its genesis [eg, position statement] began with the simple premise that the therapeutic treatment and rehabilitation of animals is evolving to include non-veterinarians, that the statutory and regulatory landscape is rather barren relative to this evolving practice, and that unless these three regulatory groups take some leadership in addressing this issue, what will inevitably develop will be a rather messy pattern of practice and regulation probably established through costly legislative and regulatory 'turf fights' and legal battles over many years." (pp. 59)

Packard's insight into what frequently occurs in political venues without strong leadership is absolute truth...if leaders in the professions themselves fail to take action, someone else will. Unfortunately that often entails individuals who have no vested interest in the scope of practice in question, and a significant lack of understanding of the educational qualifications required to carry-out new and evolving health care services. In other words, the people who make the laws governing health care scope of practice are NOT the ones providing the actual care to patients and clients. I hope this commentary illustrates the inherent problem I am trying to express and explains why it is vital for all of us to get involved in the process, and why the ARSIG is so important in serving as a national voice.

ARSIG SUBMISSION REQUEST

On a final note I respectfully ask all ARSIG members to please consider submitting one of the following items related to animal rehab for potential publication in a future edition of OPTP: an interesting case study, clinical research outcomes, literature review on a topic of choice, new book review, or even an update on current rehab techniques such as applied physical agents, manual therapy, therapeutic exercise, orthotics and bracing, etc. OPTP is an excellent forum for ARSIG education as a benefit of Section membership, and to also educate non-SIG members who also consume the publication.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

For your personal growth and benefit, make it habit in 2014 to read at least one new article related to animal rehab per month from any reputable source. Not only will you find the exercise enlightening, but it will also stimulate new ways of thinking and creativity as a rehab therapist.

Happy Holidays!

REFERENCE

1. Packard B. Collaborative practice related to treatment of animals. *Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Practice*. 2003;15(3).

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EDUCATIONAL CORNER

Lisa Bedenbaugh, PT, CCRP

There have been two recent textbook additions to the canine rehabilitation field. *Canine Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation*, edited by M. Christine Zink and Janet B. VanDyke is one of the offerings. This text covers a wide range of topics relating to canine sports medicine and the rehabilitation of orthopaedic injuries. Topics include exercise physiology, nutrition, conformation and its relation to gait and function, therapeutic exercise, modalities, assistive devices and common orthopaedic issues and rehabilitation goals for those issues. The book contains contributions from DVMs, PTs, OTs, and an orthotist/prosthetist.

The book uses evidence-based medicine, citing references of studies where there is scientific evidence to support the information provided. In those cases where there is no scientific evidence to support the author's claim, it is noted as such. Several of the chapters also contain case studies relating to the topic being discussed. These case studies include evaluation findings, a problem list, assessment, goals, and treatments.

The therapeutic exercise chapter provides several useful "pearls," such as focusing on correct posture/form with the exercises and not allowing the dog to "cheat;" keeping the dogs under control to maintain safety, use of assistive devices, and when to progress the program.

The chapters on common orthopaedic problems seen include muscle strains, tendinopathies, ligament pathologies and joint issues, such as hip dysplasia. Following the chapters

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Nancy Keyasko, MPT, CCRP, Stone Ridge, New York

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