

# ANIMAL REHABILITATION

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

### President's Message

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#### APTA COMBINED SECTIONS

As noted in my last address, I again highly encourage all of you to attend the 2017 APTA Combined Sections Meeting in San Antonio, February 15-18. The topic for the ARSIG programming will be on manual therapy for the canine cervical spine presented by Ria Acciani MPT, and David Acciani PT. This will no doubt be an excellent educational opportunity so please come and support the SIG, both at the programming session and during the Business Meeting scheduled immediately beforehand.

#### PRACTICE ANALYSIS UPDATE

The ARSIG Practice Analysis survey is undergoing final preparations before an official launch to all SIG members. The end product is a survey tool that will require approximately 60 to 90 minutes to adequately complete, but the data will be incredibly vital to future SIG planning. Therefore, it will be important for everyone to complete the survey once received. The goal is to finalize the survey in electronic format sometime this fall.

#### CALIFORNIA VETERINARY MEDICAL BOARD

The California Animal Rehab Task Force continues to move forward with meetings and negotiations. As noted in the prior President's Message, a Gofundme campaign has been organized to support the efforts of the task force. If you wish to donate to the fund, you may do so at the following link: <https://www.gofundme.com/mqzmtu3g>. Please watch the "must see" video also posted on the website to gain a greater appreciation for physical therapists treating neurologic canine conditions.

#### IF I HAD A CRYSTAL BALL

I wish I could predict the future of animal rehabilitation in the United States, and globally for that matter. I can only speculate on what has the potential to become a significant and most gratifying niche practice for the profession of physical therapy if only a greater number of physical therapists would expand their skill set and enter the field.

Over the past few years there has been an increased number of students expressing an interest in animal rehabilitation, but they all ask the same questions, "How does one get started in animal practice, and how much income can one generate?" My response to these questions is described below.

First, physical therapists have a professional duty to review the laws in their state of residence to determine if animal practice is even legal. This entails a thorough review both of state statutes (eg, PT Scope of Practice), in addition to PT and veterinary regulatory language pertaining to practice on animals. In most cases explicit language for PTs to practice on animals does not exist, but loopholes in some states have been identified by ARSIG legislative liaisons. Therefore, if questions arise regarding animal practice, please inquire with appropriate state licensing

boards or APTA Chapter Associations for clarification.

If it is legal for physical therapists to practice, then the next step is for the therapist to acquire appropriate educational competencies in either canine or equine rehabilitation, or both if so desired. Additional education is essentially mandatory for physical therapists so they may practice on animals with appropriate compassion, competence, and confidence to earn respect and integrity among peers and by the veterinary profession.

Second, yes, physical therapists can make a reasonable living practicing on animals as a predominately cash-based option. Physical therapists have used various models of practice including self-employment, home-based care, leasing contracts with veterinary clinics, and other collaborations for space and equipment utilization. The key to success in animal practice is to be creative and persistent.

#### ADDED CREDENTIALS

You may or may not have noticed that since the last edition of *OPTP*, I successfully completed a certification in equine rehabilitation through Northeast Seminars at the University of Tennessee. I thoroughly enjoyed the learning opportunity to share ideas and past experiences with new colleagues in veterinary and physical therapy practice. Historically I have only focused on canine care, but have found the world of equine rehabilitation and sport performance to be an incredible experience.

Since getting my certification, I have collaborated in equine practice with Sharon Classen, PT, CERP, who presented on elite Show Jumping athletes during CSM last January. Sharon has an immense depth of knowledge, experience, and energy. Through our valuable relationship, I have gained a greater appreciation for viewing the horse as an animal with incredible athletic ability. Witnessing immediate improvement in equine sport performance during competitive equestrian show jumping following physical therapy care is very gratifying. These experiences have also made me realize just how beneficial physical therapy interventions can be when applied to the equine client. Hopefully more physical therapists in the future will consider a career or at least a hobby working with equine clients.

#### CALL FOR ARTICLES

Please help; I am seeking energetic individual SIG members willing to contribute to the *OPTP* for the greater cause of animal rehabilitation. For the next edition, I am particularly interested in articles related to any of the following topics: (1) canine or equine nutrition; (2) updates on scientific evidence for any therapeutic physical agent including shock wave, laser, dry needling; or (3) unique treatment techniques or exercise options for any given pathology or physical condition. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions related to this special request. This is your chance to share valuable knowledge with others.

#### CONTRIBUTORY ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In this edition of *OPTP*, Jennifer Brooks provides an insightful case study related to a tibial nerve laceration in a German Shepherd. The outcome of the case is well worth the read.

Thanks again for submitting another fine example of skilled physical therapy care in action.



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