

Investigating Pathology

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He says, “No one else in the world has this. It’s revolutionized the way we teach.

“The Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital developed an integrated hospital records system that has been Web-based for six or seven years. It includes medical records, diagnostic images and laboratory data—all ‘in house’—and pathology case records going back to 1982, with digitized photographs integrated into the data base since 2000. It’s a tremendous teaching tool.”

Once each student “has a go” at the case, the others are invited to join in.

The group begins viewing digital “Kodachromes”—color photographs of tissue samples from previous cases. As each image appears, the students are in turn “on the spot” to precisely describe the lesion, accurately discuss the morphology (including identify the species) and draw conclusions based on the evidence. Once each student “has a go” at the case, the others are invited to join in.

First up is Jennifer Reese, with a cross section of what appears to be a sheep hoof. She describes the lesion,

Jennifer Reese reveals the equine tendon injury that led to infection and ultimately, death. She shares her findings with Dr. Garcia.



“severe, subacute, focal, hemorrhagic...” The emphasis in case reporting is on precise language.

One of the students exclaims aloud as a “zinger” comes onscreen. It’s a not-very-pretty cross section of spinal tissue with a tumor next to a vertebral body—it’s just difficult to tell which one.

Throughout the exercise, Dr. Wilson challenges the students with questions to further their investigative skills and broaden their thinking to include multiple species. His approach is to urge the students to analyze not just the ultimate cause, but the entire process in the live animal that led to its death.

Once they’ve reviewed the set of Kodachromes, Dr. Wilson asks, “Has everyone had a chance on the hot seat?” and praises the students, “You all had very thoughtful analyses and were able to pick up very subtle lesions.”

Dr. Garcia echoes the praise and acknowledges that mastery of precise descriptive terminology can be a humbling challenge. As the morning progresses, the words “vacuolated,” “urolithiasis” and “lymphohistiocytic” will be part of the conversation.

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Scholarship Recipient Makes the Most of Fourth-Year Studies

“It’s hard to sum up the fourth-year experience, because things are always changing—the rotation you’re on, the caseload that week, how close boards are, etc.,” says Jennifer Reese.

“When I’m not at school,” she says, “I’m usually studying for boards, reading up on my cases, or doing things like working on my internship applications. Board examinations are held in November and December, and internship applications are due November 30. I’ve also been working on a research project for the last year.”

Reese is a recipient of the Seli Gernhardt Scholarship awarded to a female student specializing in equine medicine.

Dr. Gernhardt was president of the Equine Medicine Club and loved horses. She lost her life in an auto accident en route to Maryland to begin veterinary practice after commencement in 1994.

Her parents, who established the scholarship endowment in 1995, add funds every year in her memory. Names of the recipients are inscribed on a plaque displayed in the hallway of the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital Large Animal Clinic.

Digital radiographs of a catastrophically injured alpaca spine appear on the computer monitor and are projected to the entire conference room.

