



HERE'S A SECRET ...

Human Medicine Doesn't Have It All Figured Out Either

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"Human medicine is the gold standard." I clearly remember that being the party line in veterinary school. We, as veterinarians, were to strive to reach that pinnacle of medical success! I blindly thought that transplants and robotic surgery were the "best" and were simply out of reach. That's where that "not a real doctor" feeling came from!

A few years out of veterinary school, I attended my first crossover conference. I struck up a conversation with a human medicine anesthesiologist and shop talk had us comparing drugs, laughing over dose differences, and having a bunch of "aha" moments in which we realized how similar our practices actually were. In fact, he expressed admiration for veterinary medicine's more widespread use of sedation, analgesia, and low-stress practices. It was my first clue that veterinary medicine wasn't an ant hill next to Mount Everest.

My next reality check was much more serious. My human friend had cancer, and it was terminal. Watching his neurosurgeon, no doubt

an accomplished and well-trained medical professional, struggle to tell his family that my friend would not wake up was terrible. The emotions, struggles, and fears were at the very top of my mind, but in the back of my head, a reality crept in. He wasn't good at end-of-life care, and veterinarians are so much better—more training and practice had given our profession the edge. As the neurosurgeon awkwardly left the room, his family turned to me for help, which I was honored to provide.

Despite these experiences, I still held on to the belief that veterinary medicine was the distant and low-class cousin of human medicine. More recently, though, I attended a human medicine conference focused on technology, information management, and data. Initially, I thought I would be a bit lost. After all, human medicine was so far ahead of us, right? Then I attended sessions on struggles with access to care, workforce shortages, and practitioner acceptance of telehealth. I left bewildered. In human medicine, there are mid-level practitioners, government support, and insurance-supported telehealth apps, and they still have the same issues? Yes, they do!

I have come to realize that veterinary medicine is not "behind" human medicine. It is a unique profession that in many ways is running parallel to human medicine; "behind" in some ways, "ahead" in others. While we can continue to learn and grow based on human medicine, veterinary medicine is as unique and advanced as any profession. We need to find our solutions, whether they are for individual patients or for our profession as a whole. **TVP**

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This column is titled "The Secret Life of Vets" so I can talk about the secrets that really should be considered well-known truths. These are the not-so-secret secrets that can help change our thinking and our profession for the better.

