



North American Veterinary Medical Education Consortium

National Meeting 1: Executive Summary

**Las Vegas, Nevada
Feb 11-13, 2010**

June 2, 2010

Executive Summary

The North American Veterinary Medical Education Consortium (NAVMEC) was launched by the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) in 2009 “to ensure that veterinary medical education meets the needs of our changing society.”

NAVMEC’s overall objective is to develop a “flexible road map for veterinary medical education, supported by accreditation and testing/licensure” so that the veterinary profession can meet changing societal needs.

The goal of this report is to provide a record of the broad discussions that occurred during the meeting.

Approximately 90 participants attended the first meeting, representing a spectrum of veterinary sectors (public and private), principally from the U.S. with a small number of attendees from Canada, the Caribbean, and South America.

The objective of the meeting was to:

- Discuss global societal changes 2010-2030
- Explore what this society will need from the veterinary profession
- Define the veterinary skills/competencies needed to meet these societal needs

Further information on NAVMEC is available at www.navmec.org

1.1 What Society Needs from the Veterinary Profession (2015 – 2020)

Using stimulus presentations, plenary discussion and focus breakout sessions, ‘societal needs’ fell into 2 distinct categories: external or internal to the profession.

1.1.1 External to the Veterinary Profession

- Medical & diagnostic technologies are evolving rapidly – will impact traditional veterinary skills, and potentially expand the spectrum of specialties (e.g. robotics, cloning, stem cells)
 - Veterinary clients will have even greater access to information on the Internet.
 - New agriculture technologies have the potential for dramatically changing farm animal production
 - In a borderless world, DVMs will be expected to be the ‘protectors of food safety’
 - Food shortages worldwide will create new roles and pressures for veterinarians
 - An increasing expectation for veterinarians to be ‘community leaders’, as food safety, human health and animal health issues merge in the public’s perception (e.g. One Health advocates)
 - The public will expect veterinarians to be excellent communicators, present information objectively and clearly, and to use contemporary communications methods (including ‘virtual visits’)
-

- The veterinary profession will be expected to reflect the diverse populations and culture(s) it serves, and veterinarians will need to understand, respect, and be sensitive to diversity and the cultural differences of their locations, including language skills and alternative medicine
- Veterinary profession will need to understand how diverse cultures may interpret animal welfare standards.
- The public will be increasingly aware of animal welfare and will expect veterinarians to be animal advocates and to address ethical topics

1.1.2 Internal to the Veterinary Profession

- Expectations of Future Employers of DVMs
 - DVMs are at the intersection of human, animal and environmental health
 - Food supply medicine will become an interdisciplinary effort
 - Veterinarians must provide more acute critical thinking/problem solving
 - Respected leadership in disaster management
 - DVMs involved in public office at all levels of government
 - More public communication and education
- Financial & Economic Issues
 - There is decreased state funding to veterinary schools – some schools are responding to the budget deficit by increasing class sizes, especially with additional out-of-state students.
 - Students are graduating from veterinary school with debt that is increasing disproportionate to entry-level salaries; current trends may not be sustainable over time.
 - While upwards of 40% of graduating DVMs are choosing to pursue more training, there is little agreement on either the need or reason for this trend.
 - Graduates need strong mentoring & coaching in their first jobs.

1.1.3 Commentary

How do we prepare new grads for a career in which the technologies and tools will be dramatically different in 5-10 years? The near-future prospect of rapid-access to validated knowledge and information will change the role of veterinarians (and other professionals) from their traditional role as the sole source of expertise. This spectrum of new technologies will certainly impact the role of veterinarians, and how they interface with the rest of society – potentially changing the nature of the profession. However, predicting these impacts with any specificity is almost impossible. Perhaps this implies training (and re-training) curricula, which are very flexible, and can be changed rapidly.

1.2 Future Skills & Competencies

Multiple breakout sessions and large group discussions explored veterinary competencies, along many different parameters:

- Technical and non-technical (i.e. communication or management)
- Core or common to all veterinarians and discipline-specific competencies
- Existing recognized competencies of respected veterinarians and anticipated competencies that may be needed in 15-20+ years.

Although breakout sessions used multiple, various lenses, the same foundational or core veterinary competencies were consistently described. With thanks to the insights of Dr. Kate Hodgson (representative from the College of Veterinarians of Ontario, the provincial regulatory agency), these competencies might be grouped as follows:

- **Multi-Species Clinical Expertise**
 - *Diagnosis and therapeutic skills; animal behavior, wellness, and welfare*
 - *Prevention and treatment of common health problems*
- **Interpersonal Communications & Education**
 - *Facilitate doctor-patient-client relationship*
 - *Effective interactions with team members, colleagues & community*
 - *Oral & written communications, and use of e-media (social networking)*
 - *Perform compassionate health care delivery*
- **Collaboration**
 - *Work within a healthcare team to achieve optimal patient care*
 - *Partner with interdisciplinary healthcare providers, policy makers, etc.*
- **Management (Self, Teams, Systems)**
 - *Efficient operation of business; financial literacy*
 - *Resource allocation, delegation, prioritization & investment decisions*
- **Public Health & One Health Promotion**
 - *Prevent, diagnose & control zoonotic diseases*
 - *Involved in the political process and advocacy*
 - *Knowledge of food safety and security*
- **Life-Long Learning**
 - *Critical thinking, problem solving & curiosity*
 - *Invest in self-directed learning to develop and expand competencies*
- **Ethical Professional Leadership**
 - *Committed to health & welfare of patients*
 - *Protection of human health through ethical practice*
 - *Considered to be leaders in the community; media-savvy*
 - *Volunteer to be spokesperson*
- **Adaptable to Changing Environments**
 - *Able to quickly acquire technology expertise*
 - *Cultural diversity awareness & skills*

Inevitably, discussions broached critical curriculum-related topics, such as:

- Once core competencies are defined for Veterinary Medicine, should these be implemented across the spectrum of education?
- When should discipline-specific competencies be trained (tracking in the professional curriculum or post-graduate specialization)?
- How practical are expectations for changes in accreditation and licensure?
- How to implement new competency training formats (however defined), while taking account of the cost to the student, and the colleges?

1.2.1. Commentary on Skills/Competencies

- Presenting current (or under-development) lists of skills/competencies, together with a consolidated set from Meeting #1, will enable the discussions on curriculum to proceed more productively.
- Innovative approaches to merging technical and non-technical skills training are likely being used in other venues, and should be researched, and presented at future meetings, including from other professions.
- Much of the discussions at Meeting #1 revolved around 'future skills that will be required, however many of those skills are also needed in today's world. Curricula will surely need to be changeable at rather short notice (annually?) to react to new scientific, technological, environmental and economic factors.

1.3 NAVMEC Success Factors

Participants provided NAVMEC with a set of success factors to ensure that NAVMEC's recommendations are broadly implemented in an effective and timely manner.

- *Success Factors*
 - Create a top-10 list of actions that can be implemented (try to deliver one improvement in 2011)
 - Appreciate that navigating through different cultures at different colleges will be challenging
 - Realize that one veterinarian cannot be all things to all people
 - Develop clear, concise, defined goals for NAVMEC
 - *Change*
 - Create a sense of urgency – will a focus on student debt be the driver?
 - Changes must be either driven by Council On Education (COE) or otherwise mandated
 - Implement Kotter's change process
 - *Competencies & Curriculum*
 - Create a model list of core competencies
 - Have flexibility in recommendations to be able to implement within different schools
 - Focus on entry-level skills rather than the tertiary-level skills mostly modeled in veterinary teaching hospitals.
-

-
- *Funding/Licensing/Accreditation*
 - Identify and secure resources (dollars and people) to implement the report
 - Leverage accreditation and licensing processes to generate change
- *Implementation & Buy In*
 - Must have an implementation team
 - Recommendations must be specific and achievable
 - Engage faculty – faculty buy-in is critical
 - Advocacy by meeting participants and supporting organizations
 - **"A miracle will really help!"**

*Dr. Ken Andrews
NAVMEC Facilitator
1 April 2010*
