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## Letter from the Editor *aka SVECCS Member-at-Large*



*Dear Readers,*

Thank you for the opportunity to be your main correspondent of SVECCS news this past year. I hope I provided you with some valuable and entertaining information. I have enjoyed my term as Member-at-Large and hope to serve you all

well as Secretary next term. I would also like to thank all the SVECCS chapters that shared stories and goals with us. Your challenges and successes give all of us inspiration and guidance for our clubs and our futures as ECC physicians.

My final issue will feature advice from current DAVECCs on how to make your journey through emergency and critical care as enjoyable and stress-free as possible.

We would like to extend a hearty thanks to Dr. Justine A. Lee, DVM, DAVECC from Pet Poison Helpline and Dr. Elke Rudloff, DVM, DACVECC and VECCS

President for their insight and guidance on navigating careers in ECC medicine.

It was a welcomed challenge to be a voice for every chapter however I encourage everyone to participate in the newsletters of the future. Your ideas and stories add personality and insight beyond what one person can achieve. This is your newsletter and we want it to represent everyone!

Thanks again and I look forward to seeing everyone at IVECCS this year!

*~Heather Napolitano*



The 2011 IVECCS symposium is just around the corner!

Register now at:

<http://www.2011.iveccs.org/>

The theme for IVECCS 2011 is "The Role of the GI Tract in Emergency and Critical Care". Segments will include the latest in Exotics, Nutrition, Large Animal, ER and Practice Management, Diagnostic Imaging, Cardiology, Toxicology, Pharmacology, CPR, Surgery, Recovery, Disaster Medicine and much more.

Some courses have limited enrollment, so register soon for those classes that can't be missed.

As a student you can receive complementary general registration by volunteering 2 half-day blocks (an entire morning or afternoon) as a Room Monitor, Assistant Moderator, Operation Assistant or working the Information Booth. Click on the "Student Volunteers" tab to see a description of duties.

Students are able to request particular sessions (excluding wet labs and

offsite sessions), so if there is a course you would like to be present at you may request to volunteer at that time. No guarantees can be made, so if you absolutely want to attend a session you should register for it.

Selection is on a first come, first served basis so register today!

Once you receive confirmation you can add workshops, labs and register for the 5k run. See you in Nashville!

## From the Eyes of an Emergency Critical Care Specialist

Author: Justine A. Lee, DVM, DACVECC




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***“It’s your clinical year that counts the most!”***



Kudos to all those interested in the field of emergency critical care. My advice to veterinary students is to not pigeon-hole yourself into one field so early in your career. Instead, stay “eyes wide open” going into clinics, as your passion may change significantly as you go through different rotations. When I started my veterinary career path, I was passionate about surgical oncology... and look at me now! Initially, I didn’t have an interest in emergency critical care; after all, it was still a new growing field, and as I told my intern mate who was pursuing ECC “Why? They all die!” However with the improvements in the quality of veterinary medicine, this isn’t true anymore. It wasn’t until I had finished my internship at Angell that I missed the crazy, mad adrenaline rush of the ER, and ended up pursuing an ECC residency after taking some time off. I’m glad I didn’t rush immediately into a residency after my internship, as I was pretty burnt out.

### **How to do better in your ER/ICU rotation... and get yourself that internship or residency!**

I’ve noticed a big transition in the quality of veterinary students between Generation X and Generation Y. Recently, I’ve had some students on ER rotation who inquire if they can leave at 5 pm (immediately at the end of their shift). While I’m a huge proponent of work-life balance, you’re just going to have to realize that you sacrifice this during your 4<sup>th</sup> year, internship, and residency. When I was a vet student (walking barefoot in the snow both ways uphill), we would never ask that question “*Can I leave now?*” We were just there to grind it out and we absolutely never left before the faculty person, and rarely left before the resident. When it comes down to it, your fourth year is one of your most important. It’s imperative that you remain passionate about learning, as it’s the only year of your life where you’ll have good supervision and support, unless you enter an internship or residency. This reflects in your patient care; how well you communicate with your classmates, nursing staff, and clients; and how committed you are to your daily “grind” of clinical rotations.

When I assess a student for a potential internship or residency position, it’s based on the following: 1) how well they play with others (checking in with all their rotation-mates to see if they need help before leaving, being nice and professional to nursing staff) 2) their work ethic (minimal whining, committed to learning, participating in rounds, etc.) 3) their eagerness (attempting the Doppler measurement, or asking to do procedures like a thoracocentesis or abdominocentesis). I also assess large animal rotation grades as a measure of work ethic. In other words, if you received an A in large animal rotations (even though you’re small animal track), it means you excel regardless of what the subject matter!

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### **Words of advice:**

- I’m a big supporter of everyone pursuing an internship – after all, you can’t come back and reapply years down the line, as the likelihood that you’ll obtain an internship plummets significantly post-graduation. The experience, training, and confidence that an internship gives you is unmatched... provided you pick the “right” internship (e.g., an internship that trains you, not just uses you to work overnights!).
  - Don’t be discouraged about your chances of getting an internship. I was a C student in vet school. After a year of A’s in clinics in my fourth year, I became a B student. Yet, I had my pick of internships based on my clinical year. *It’s your clinical year that counts the most!* Strategically extern at targeted places where you want to consider doing an internship – the one-on-one time with the veterinary staff there, along with word-of-mouth is what will help you get your dream internship!
  - Our field has a tendency to develop significant compassionate fatigue and burn-out, and I caution students about that. I had severe compassionate fatigue after 11 years of emergency practice, and had to mentally re-group and take several years off before finding my passion again.
  - Also note that our field is wonderfully unique and provides you unique opportunities in life. For example, I went from academia (working in a busy, urban ER) to a desk job heading up Pet Poison Helpline (an animal poison control based out of Minneapolis)!
  - My advice for students considering an ECC residency is this: unless you are planning to go into academia as a DACVECC, I feel that criticalists are not well recognized. In other words, their role is not well developed yet in private practice. You can be a really great ER doctor without having done an ECC residency!
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## Words of Wisdom from Your VECCS President

Emergency and critical care (ER/CC) is a rapidly expanding field in veterinary medicine. It is a "team sport" meaning that patient care depends on a well-oiled, team consisting of the veterinarian, technician, assistant, receptionist and practice manager. How that team communicates with each other and their commitment to continuing education determines the success of the patient care administered, and the (future) veterinarian (YOU) is the key player. So, when a student has any interest at all in ER/CC, the best they can do is to start preparing for clinical rotations as they plan their curriculum. This can be in the form of taking electives in topics related to ER/CC and participating in out-rotations in ER/CC.

Additional exposure can be found by working as a nurse in your school's ER/ICU, visiting and observing in human ERs and ICU, becoming involved in your student chapter of the veterinary emergency and critical care society, and attending continuing education seminars focused on ER/CC. No matter whether you plan to go into general practice or focus on ER/CC, you will achieve a sense of comfort in handling emergencies the more you expose yourself to the field.

To make the most of an ER/CC externship, the student should be on time, come with a good attitude, be willing to stay as long as it takes to make sure all patient's are stable, be just as willing to clean a cage as you are to scrub into a surgical procedure, and pay close attention to every team member's role. Students who have a hard time adjusting to long hours and different shifts will have a difficult time being enthusiastic about their externship in ER/CC. Most ER/CC externs will work 40-60 hours/week, and they be asked to work nights, weekends and stay beyond scheduled time. This is in order to give you a sense of the commitment that is required to work in ER/CC, a field with no scheduled appointments.



*Dr. Elke Rudloff & Friend*

*"If there is one single thing you can do in looking more closely at ER/CC, that would be to find the right mentor"*

One of the wonderful aspects of ER/CC is that any veterinarian with the drive and passion for it can become a skilled clinician and provide excellent patient care. Obtaining board-certification in the specialty is for those who feel the need to really delve into the science of ER/CC and want to not only experience a higher level of education with a focused residency, but also prove their knowledge by passing the specialty board exam. With respect to preparing to do a residency in ER/CC, most programs look for candidates that have not only internship experience, but one that is mentored by board certified specialists. Rarely does a candidate have the equivalent experience of a structured internship to be able to apply with work-experience alone. Both rotating and focused ER/CC internship are acceptable. It is also acceptable for a candidate to have been in practice before or after the internship. Most of our interns come into their programs thinking they will continue on into a residency. After they experience the amount of work and dedication that is needed to continue, most of them decide not to apply for a residency right away. Their internships make them highly sought after for filling job openings of any kind- including general practice, ER/CC work, and industry.

If I would have done anything differently in my career, I would have tried to have more patience and grace in my earlier years (I sincerely hope I do now). The stress of the unknown was hard to manage at times, and without the concerted efforts of my mentors, who taught me not only about the science and art of ER/CC, but also the importance of having good communication skills, I would have failed miserably in veterinary medicine. So if there is one single thing you can do in looking more closely at ER/CC, that would be to find the right mentor(s).

Elke Rudloff, DVM, DACVECC  
VECCS President  
Director of Education  
Animal Emergency Center & Specialty Services



## VIN Enhances Relationship with SVECCS ~ by Diya Sharma

Over the past year, National SVECCS has had the privilege of working closely with VIN, one of the leading online resources for veterinarians worldwide. Through collaboration with Dr. Paul Pion, DVM, DACVIM (cardiology) founder of VIN, and the amazing VIN technical team, SVECCS has taken a step forward with its ability to reach out to more student veterinarians to provide a higher standard of resource sharing between student colleagues and veterinary professionals alike.

Some Highlights of VINs Contributions to SVECCS:

- The creation of a SVECCS folder on VIN, where student members are able to share information through an established SVECCS listserv and various SVECCS message boards pertaining to Internships, externships and general information between chapters. Visit the SVECCS message boards at: [www.vin.com/sveccs](http://www.vin.com/sveccs). If you would like to be added to the listserv, please contact [nsvceccs@gmail.com](mailto:nsvceccs@gmail.com).
- A brand-new, re-vamped SVECCS website powered by eVetsite, a VIN creation. The website is currently under construction, with the anticipated release date in the near future! In addition the same pertinent information as the old site, it includes a more modern design, with special features including a calendar that may be updated regularly by members to include events occurring at SVECCS chapters all across the country, photo albums to help show who we are as SVECCS, a more clear and simple lay-out to maximize the dissemination of information, and the key feature of being a self regulated site. Keep your eyes out for its debut!
- The promotion of the SVECCS externship survey in the SVECCS folder on VIN, as well as its coverage at the 2011 IVECCS Symposium, where VIN plans to include the survey online at the IVECCS Cyber Café for practitioners and clinic representatives from all across North America to complete. This is a wonderful way to help document the most extensive externship opportunities available for our students!

*Tremendous ground has been covered within this relationship and we would like to extend a heart-felt thank you to Dr. Paul Pion for his support, expertise and his commitment to helping SVECCS.*

*VIN's contributions have meant a lot to the students, and we can confidently say that VIN is actively helping SVECCS reach its full potential.*

*SVECCS looks forward to continuing its collaboration with VIN, as well as growing alongside such an influential partner.*

## PURDUE UNIVERSITY

### Purdue University SVECCS Events

**Author: Sherry Wynn**

Purdue University's SVECCS club has had an involved and successful year. We were able to merge lectures with other clubs in order to get more students involved and exposed to emergency and critical care medicine.

Lectures from this past year included "Common Household Toxins" by Dr. Pete Bill combined with AAFP club and "The Acute Abdomen" by Dr. Amy Rader. Students were given the opportunity to discuss in-house cases with Purdue's own criticalists, Dr. Paula Johnson and Dr. Tony Johnson, in bi-monthly ICU

rounds. Dr. Tony Johnson also presented a lecture on the various causes and treatments of hemorrhage. As a VIN consultant, Dr. Johnson instructed students on how to use a VIN hemorrhage computer simulator in order to observe the effects of various blood loss scenarios and selected treatment options.

Each semester SVECCS provides an interactive wetlab for members to get hands on experience and practice procedures necessary in critical care medicine. Last semester students were given the opportunity to learn about the latest techniques in CPR

and practice these skills using mannequin dogs. In April, the club held a procedures wetlab where students were able to perform procedures such as placement of thoracostomy tubes, tracheostomy tubes, various feeding tubes, and central venous catheters.

To support the club's events, SVECCS hosted a bake sale and raised over \$200 for meetings and wetlabs. As vet students we all know a little snack on exam days goes a long way! Overall, the club had a fun and exciting year and hopes to grow to get even more students involved next year.

*"Dr. Johnson instructed students on how to use a VIN hemorrhage computer simulator..."*

## What's with These Externships? *~ By Joseph D'Abbraccio*

Externships are a period of time a student spends at a clinic, hospital, other university's teaching hospital, large company, government agency, etc. to gain more experience in different areas of interest. Typically said externships are at least one week and are as long as eight weeks. However the time limit and minimum are under the discretion of the externship host. Externships add very unique experience to your veterinary curriculum as well as enhance what you are learning in the classroom. These experiences allow you to explore all the different areas of the profession, which are helpful in deciding your path during and after veterinary school. Besides the great intellectual boost externships also serve as key networking opportunities. Such opportunities are of great benefit for people interested in participating in internship and then even on to a residency. Always keep in mind that the veterinary profession although worldwide is tightly knit and can be played to your advantage or even disadvantage.

### *Where do I find out about an externship?*

Be sure to check out the new and every growing SVECCS externship list. The 2010-2011 SVECCS National Board worked very hard to contact thousands of veterinarians all over the globe. Another great externship site is the one maintained by the AVMA ([http://www.avma.org/vcc/student\\_externships/](http://www.avma.org/vcc/student_externships/)).

### *When should I setup an externship?*

The best time to setup an externship always play along the lines that earlier the better. Some externships require at least a year in advance of application/intent and then of course there may be a waiting period while the hospital or institution reviews your information. Some externships are highly competitive, and the main reason for this is that they are highly sought after by other students or even recent graduates who would like a little more time in a specific area.

### *What is required for an externship?*

Each individual externship is different while some are very informal others require a large amount of paperwork. No matter where you decide to apply for an externship you should be sure to have a well thought out, purpose driven, extraneously proofread résumé. Some academic institutions ask for a curriculum vitae (CV) and as such these are different then résumés (check out <http://www.vet.ksu.edu/dean/cv.htm>). If you need help with writing a resume ask your schools librarian or resource coordinator as they may be able to point you in the direction of a campus workshop or even offer assistance directly.

Some other things to consider would be letters of recommendation from faculty members (clinical or pre-clinical), previous externship experiences, or veterinarians you may have worked with in the past. It might also be of benefit to ask someone that doesn't have anything to do with your academic performance or veterinary profession for a character driven reference. Character driven references may be helpful for an externship director to get a better understanding of the type of person you are and what you might bring to their externship program. Lastly, a client reference is also a nice extra to have. If you have had the chance to work in your veterinary school's hospital or another hospital and were able to develop a client relationship see if they would be willing to write you a reference.

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***“Some externships require at least a year in advance of application... then of course there may be a waiting period...”***

Externships can be proven to be very valuable experiences and you should be sure to take full advantage of their opportunities. The time that an externship provides away from your regular classroom education can really prepare you for your fourth year clinical rotations but more importantly your clinical future. Treat each externship experience as a job interview, as you never know you may end up applying for a job at one of them. Or even be offered a job upon completion. If you are not interested in a job right out of school but are more interested in an internship, residency or both externships are very helpful! While you may not exactly be participating in an internship at a particular externship location (either they do not offer such or you're not interested) the connections you make with the clinicians and other veterinary staff is very important. A prospective internship may call your previous externship locations as an “off-the-record” reference.

***Keep an eye out our fall newsletter, which will include information about internships and residencies. Just in time for the start of the match!!! ☺***

## Newly Elected 2012 SVECCS Board Members

### SVECCS 2011 OFFICERS

President Joseph  
D'Abbraccio  
[nsveccs@gmail.com](mailto:nsveccs@gmail.com)

VP Amanda Moon  
[sveccsvp@gmail.com](mailto:sveccsvp@gmail.com)

Secretary Cyndi Fichtner  
[sveccssec@gmail.com](mailto:sveccssec@gmail.com)

Members at Large:  
Heather Napolitano -  
Newsletter  
[sveccsml1@gmail.com](mailto:sveccsml1@gmail.com)

Diya Sharma - Website  
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Please visit our website  
<http://sveccs.org> for more  
information on SVECCS  
chapters.

Please join me in congratulating our new board members for 2012. The success we had over this past year has led to a second term for President Joseph A. D'Abbraccio from St. Matthew's University. His hard work and dedication has helped our national chapter expand beyond our expectations for 2011. We are thrilled that he has committed to a second term and are optimistic that we will achieve even more success in 2012. Current board member

Heather Napolitano, St. Matthew's University, is slated for her second year as a board member succeeding as Secretary. We are pleased to announce our newest members Sara Smith, Michigan State, as Vice President, Erika Fauth, Louisiana State, Member-at-Large in charge of the website and Anne Kelman, Ontario Veterinary College as Member-at-Large in charge of the newsletter. All three colleges contributed valuable input

to the newsletters in the past year and we are thrilled to have representatives from those universities on the board for 2012.

We will continue our commitment to providing our members with the newest in ECC care and presenting you with creative ideas and inspiration on how to grow your chapters and continue to be competitive in your field.

