

## A Study on Determining the Opinion of Veterinarians on Continuing Education <sup>[1]</sup>

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### Summary

This study was conducted to determine the continuing education demands of veterinarians. In the present study, a survey was undertaken for 97 out of 220 (90 male and 7 female) who are members of the Samsun Region Veterinarians Chamber (operating in the cities of Samsun, Sinop, and Ordu). SPSS (11.5) program was used to analyze the collected data and their frequency, percentage, and x2 values were calculated. The results of the study revealed that 82.5% of participants received continuing education and 87.6% of them require continuing education. The results also showed that veterinarians need training mostly in the field of clinical applications and diagnostic methods, and that universities are the most preferable institutions for them to receive continuing education.

**Keywords:** *Continuing education, In-service training, Lifelong education, Veterinary medicine*

## Veteriner Hekimlerin Sürekli Eğitime İlişkin Görüşlerinin Belirlenmesi Üzerine Bir Çalışma

### Özet

Bu araştırma veteriner hekimlerin sürekli eğitim ihtiyaçlarını tespit etmek amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında, Samsun Bölgesi Veteriner Hekimler Odasına (Samsun, Sinop ve Ordu) kayıtlı 220 veteriner hekimden 97'sinin (90 erkek 7 kadın) katıldığı anket uygulaması yapılmıştır. İstatiksel analizler için SPSS (11.5) programı kullanılmış ve sonuçlar frekans, yüzde ve ki-kare değerleri hesaplanarak değerlendirilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, araştırmaya katılan veteriner hekimlerin %82.5'nin sürekli eğitim aldığı ve %87.6'nin sürekli eğitime ihtiyaç duyduğu tespit edilmiştir. Veteriner hekimlerin en çok klinik uygulamalar ve teşhis metotları konularında eğitime ihtiyaç duydukları belirlenmiş ve sürekli eğitim almak istedikleri kurumların başında üniversitelerin geldiği saptanmıştır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** *Sürekli eğitim, Hizmet içi eğitim, Yaşam boyu eğitim, Veteriner hekim*

### INTRODUCTION

Within general educational norms, improvement of the society and the training of each individual of that society according to the required goals are regarded as an attainable necessity. For individuals, it is held that the necessity is to provide them with the necessary knowledge, skills and habits such as adapting to the environment, having a positive attitude and motivation, and improving their personal and professional

competency. These skills should be supported through continuing education when needed <sup>1</sup>.

Target group is adults and it is planned and carried out according to the needs of people in point of location and time <sup>2</sup>.

"Continuing education" was first initiated in Turkey in the 1960's. The training offers planned educational activities to provide for necessary



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knowledge, skills, attitude, and opportunities to professionals and workers in the field increase efficiency throughout their careers and it functions as a subsystem for formal and informal education that are the two main areas of general education <sup>1</sup>.

In Turkey, There is not a planned, periodical and business like veterinary continuing education program expect the meetings of public and private sector which are related to their field and their presentation, particularly the drug sector <sup>2</sup>. The education performed on public field comprise occupational education of workers and only artificial insemination courses are intended for both public and private veterinarians and also for veterinary health technicians <sup>2i</sup>. On this subject it was recommended in the outcome report of II<sup>nd</sup> Turkish Veterinary Medicine Assembly that The Council of Turkish Veterinary Association should prepare a directive about continuing veterinary medical education (CVME) in Turkey and credit system and it is also should be responsible for organization, continuation, supervision and providing cooperation of institutions <sup>2</sup>. In this situation the legal principal of this subject was appeared in the regulation prepared by The Council of Turkish Veterinary Association <sup>ii</sup>.

Veterinary learning does not end with graduation. In fact, learning has only just begun, and it necessarily continues throughout every veterinarian's professional career. The need for post-graduate, continuing professional development is widely recognized by the existing accrediting bodies. Registration to practice veterinary medicine already depends on the achievement of prescribed levels of continuing development. This requirement will need to be part of the mandate of the global standard. It is inevitable that, most end up working within a restricted spectrum despite the wide range and extent of the competencies required of veterinarians <sup>3</sup>. World Veterinary Association (WVA) states that on continuing education: "The veterinary education institution must be able to assist practicing veterinarians, in their part of the country, regardless of the veterinarian's position, to cope with rapidly changing professional demands" <sup>4</sup>. The Committee on Education of WVA also recommends that the responsible authorities in the various countries make use of all available means to assure that each

member of the profession has access to quality, up-to-date continuing education and that they make use of it regularly <sup>4</sup>.

Universities, governments, professional associations and special interest groups all have roles to play in the delivery of continuing professional development to the veterinary profession and to ensure a structure in place to monitor improvements in the delivery of quality veterinary services <sup>5</sup>. Moore <sup>6</sup> has developed a method to test the four-stage learning theory to evaluate differences between CVME program attendees and non-attendees and to evaluate movement from one stage to another after a continuing education activity. He has found that continuing education activity can move practitioners from one stage of learning to another <sup>4</sup>. Moore et al.<sup>7</sup> showed that timing of events, distance, money, solo practice, stage of career, and family demands were identified as barriers to participation. Continuing education is important even after veterinarians have completed their college studies and acquired the appropriate licenses. New scientific knowledge and techniques are constantly developed, and veterinarians must keep up to date by reading scientific journals and attending professional meetings and seminars. Approximately half the states require veterinarians to attend continuing education courses to maintain their licenses <sup>8</sup>.

In Turkey, to our knowledge, there is no scientific and comprehensive study on continuing education for veterinarians.

This study is aimed to determine whether veterinarians' opinion of continuing education and to identify the veterinarians' continuing education need as conditions change to improve their skills and knowledge after formal education.

## **MATERIAL and METHODS**

This study was conducted in the cities of Samsun, Sinop and Ordu, which are in the active service region of the Samsun Region Veterinarians Chamber (SRVC). The technique described by Krejcie and Morgan <sup>9</sup> was used for 140 practitioners out of 220 working in the active service region of the SRVC. A questionnaire was designed to determine the veterinarians' opinion about CVME.

<sup>i</sup> *Resmî Gazete*: 01.07.2003 tarih ve 25155 sayılı "Suni Tohumlama, Tabii Tohumlama, Ovum ve Embriyo Transferi Faaliyetlerinin Usul ve Esasları Hakkında Yönetmelik"  
<sup>ii</sup> *Resmî Gazete*: 13.09.2006 tarih ve 26288 sayılı "Türk Veteriner Hekimleri Birliği Hizmetlerinin Yürütülmesine İlişkin Uygulama Yönetmeliği"

The questionnaire was composed of two sections as questions on occupational approach of veterinarians and continuing education of veterinarians. Seventeen parameters were used in the questionnaire regarding the topic and applied with the cooperation of SRVC. Pilot application of questionnaire to 24 lecturers of University of Ondokuz Mayıs, Faculty of Veterinary was performed on September, 2006 and the final questionnaire was prepared in the view of critiques and suggestion. After a pilot study, the data were collected by personal interviews, electronic mail, regular mail or telephone between September 2006 and September 2007.

SPSS (11.5) program was used to analyze the collected data and their frequency, percentage, and  $\chi^2$  values were calculated.

## RESULTS

Questionnaire have been applied 57 private sector and 40 public sector veterinarians' to total of 97 which are 90 male and 7 female. Overall response rate was 44%. Descriptive statistical information about the participants shown in *Table 1* and *2*. Other factors regarding the research topic were assessed with an  $\chi^2$  analysis.

According to the *Table 3*, the relation between veterinarians' are having participated in continuing

**Table 1.** Profession approach statistics on veterinarians

**Tablo 1.** Veteriner hekimlerin mesleki yaklaşımlarına ilişkin istatistikler

Questions	Answers	f	%
Do you choice of profession voluntary or out of necessity?	Voluntary	79	81.4
	Out of necessity	18	18.6
Do you have professional goals?	Yes	59	60.8
	No	38	39.2
Do you have suggestion the profession to others?	I do	31	32.0
	I do not	66	68.0
Professional education satisfactory	Yes	49	50.5
	No	48	49.5

education and the need for continuing education is meaningful. The results indicate that veterinarians who received continuing education earlier constitute the group that dominantly feels the need to obtain new training when compared to other groups.

Results of  $\chi^2$  analysis revealed that there is no meaningful relation between the professional

**Table 2.** Continuing education statistics on veterinarians

**Tablo 2.** Veteriner hekimlerin sürekli eğitimine ilişkin istatistikler

Questions	Answers	f	%
<b>Do you receive continuing education?</b>	I receive	80	82.5
	I do not receive	17	17.5
<b>Need for continuing education</b>	Yes	85	87.6
	No	12	12.4
<b>How do you keep track of professional innovations?</b>	I do not	6	6.2
	Conferences, seminars, etc.	44	45.4
	Professional journals	36	37.1
	Scientific journals	31	32.0
	Scientific books	25	25.8
	Popular newspapers	5	5.2
	Television	23	23.7
	The Internet	69	71.1
<b>On which topics do you need continuous education?</b>	Clinical applications	55	56.7
	Nutrition	32	33.0
	Medicine	29	29.9
	Feed	17	17.5
	Professional ethics	20	20.6
	Diagnostic methods	50	51.5
	Intake of diseased substances	29	29.9
	Vaccination and vaccination methods	8	8.2
	Computer	32	33.0
	Foreign language	41	42.3
<b>Which of the conditions on continuous education is of importance to you?</b>	Applications	66	68.0
	Cost	32	33.0
	Time	57	58.8
	Frequency of education	31	32.0
	Accommodation	39	40.2
<b>From which institution would you like to receive continuous education training?</b>	University	77	79.4
	Ministry of Agriculture	36	37.1
	Private sector	21	21.6
	Educational institutions abroad	43	44.3
	Professional organizations	16	16.5

**Table 3.** Relation between having participated in continuing education before and the need for continuing education

**Tablo 3.** Sürekli eğitime daha önceden katılma ile sürekli eğitime duyulan ihtiyaç arasındaki ilişki

Participating in Continuing Education		Need for Education		Total
		Yes	No	
<b>Yes</b>	f	73	7	80
	%	75.3%	7.2%	82.5%
<b>No</b>	f	11	6	17
	%	11.3%	6.2%	17.5%
<b>Total</b>	f	84	13	97
	%	86.6%	13.4%	100.0%

$\chi^2=8.512, P<0.01$

goals veterinarians have for the future and their need for professional training.

There is no meaningful relation between the institution at which veterinarians work and their need for continuing educational.

Results of  $\chi^2$  analysis show that there is no meaningful relationship between veterinarians' voluntary choice of profession and veterinarians' need for professional education and their suggestion the veterinary profession to the others.

## DISCUSSION

It might be taught that a total of 97 participants might diminish the performance of the study though 140<sup>9</sup> participants were intended to include in the study.

In the study, questionnaires were offered to the participants' personal interview, via electronic mail, official letter or by phone. It is known that the data obtained with questionnaires performed plural techniques such as via electronic, official letter or by phone might be less quality of data.

There are studies<sup>10-12</sup> conducted in Turkey regarding veterinary education. The importance of this subject was mentioned in the I<sup>st</sup> and II<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly<sup>2,13</sup> of education was pointed out by veterinarians and students according to the data of Commission Information Form of the Report of I<sup>st</sup><sup>13</sup>. However, no scientific and comprehensive research on continuing education following undergraduate studies was encountered until now. Therefore, it can be said that this is the first study to focus on veterinary continuing education in Turkey.

In the present study 87% of participants were determined to have continuing education but this education was in-service training for public veterinarians and certificate programs (artificial inseminations) which are obliged by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs<sup>2</sup>. It ought to be thought that these findings could be fundamental for preparing official pivot of continuing education programs.

In a study, it is indicated that 71% of veterinarians have chosen their profession voluntarily and that the expectations of participants of 18%, 33% and 35% have been met totally, well enough and partially respectively<sup>14</sup>. Our results are parallel with this study that 81.4% of the veterinarians participated voluntarily chosen their professions and 60.8% have professional future goals. Findings in relation to the veterinarians chosen the profession are of extra importance in Turkey as there is a nationwide Student Selection Examination. It was determined that only 32% of them suggest their profession voluntary. In the study conducted by Özen et al.<sup>15</sup>, it was specified that 57.8% of samples have occupational satisfaction but "those considering veterinary medicine as an unsatisfactory occupation were less satisfied with their life". Similarly our results showed that veterinarians are not satisfied concerning their occupation.

The study which is mentioned above reveals that most veterinarians belong to the response for the necessity of continuing education for veterinary development was 68% and the necessity for its being a continuous educational program was 52.5%<sup>14</sup>. According to the data of "Information Form" applied to the students of The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and veterinarians by the Council of Turkish Veterinary Association in the I. Turkish Veterinary Assembly<sup>13</sup>, all participants stated that continuing education is necessary and also 67.64% of them indicated that could participated in these educational programs during their annual permission<sup>2</sup>. Parallely, results of our study show that 87.6% of the veterinarians feel the need to receive continuing education. Continuing education took part in European Union (EU) Guidelines<sup>iii,iv</sup>. The necessity of continuing education is accepted as a must for license renewal necessary to carry out the profession in the United State of America (USA)<sup>8,16</sup>. Therefore, it might be told that veterinarians in Turkey are aware of continuing education and there is need for it. It might be thought that a national continuing education policy should be implemented in order to meet the demand in respect of the fact that veterinarians in Turkey consider this subject important.

iii Council Directive: 78/1026/EEC, Concerning the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications in veterinary medicine, including measures to facilitate the effective exercise of the right of establishment and freedom to provide services. 18 December 1978

iv Council Directive: 78/1027/EEC, concerning the co-ordination of provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in respect of the activities of veterinary surgeons. 18 December 1978



Participants declared that 82.5% of participants receive continuing education and 87.6% feel the need to receive continuing education. In a study comprising veterinarians of 20 EU countries it was stated that Food Quality&Safety will be an important the fields for veterinarians to work <sup>17,18</sup>. In the study conducted by Delver <sup>19</sup>, it was suggested that seven learning areas emerged: veterinary medicine, professionalism and practice management, animal welfare, livestock practice and epidemiology, prophylaxis and therapeutics, specialty diagnostics, and theriogenology. Our results are parallel with these studies that the popular continuing education topics were about clinical applications (56%), diagnostic methods (51%) and nutrition (33%) among the others. These findings showed that further work is needed to develop training programs in this area.

It was found that 68% of participants seek applications in continuing education and 58.8% consider the time of education as important. Most wanted to receive such education from universities (79.4%). This result leads to the conclusion that veterinary faculties in Turkey should prepare and implement continuing education programs besides their undergraduate programs.

It was pointed out in the study that relationship between participating in a continuing education program and their need for education was meaningful. Veterinarians who received a continuing education were determined to be the group with the greatest requirement to receive further training. Therefore the meaningful statistical data about the relationship between participation in continuing education earlier and the need for continuing education might be interpreted that that kind of trainings meet the needs of veterinarians and are useful for their occupation.

In conclusion, the results indicate that veterinarians in Samsun Region choose their profession willingly and consciously; they need continuing education to overcome the problems during professional applications and they prefer to receive this education from universities.

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