

Veterinary Research News

Fighting the cyberbully

Cyberbullying, also known as cyberharassment, is the use of email, instant messaging, and derogatory websites to bully or otherwise harass an individual or group through personal attacks, according to U.S. Legal Definitions.

Department of Justice statistics reveal that some 850,000 adults, most of them female, are targets of the practice each year. Cyberbullying has been shown to make victims feel sad, hopeless, or depressed, according to an article published in May 2007 in *Developmental Psychology*.

Cyberbullies can also harm a business's reputation, including a veterinarian's.

Dr. Kimberly May, director of professional and public affairs in the AVMA Communications Division, said cyberbullying is a trend on the rise, given what she's seen and heard from veterinarians who have reached out to her or whose experiences she's read about. Over the past year, she's talked to about 10 clinics that have experienced incidents, and, through the grapevine, has heard of another five to 10 with similar stories.

She attributes the perceived rise in cyberbullying to the increasing popularity of social media, which, because of the anonymity they afford, give individuals "the ability to lash out from behind a keyboard instead of facing the person against whom they're making the allegations or accusations."

In many cases, Dr. May says, cyberbullying of a veterinarian starts with a client who posts his or her side of a real or perceived grievance against the veterinarian online and makes a plea for justice. From there, things tend to take on a life all their own.

Dr. Colleen Currigan of the Cat Hospital of Chicago was a victim of

cyberbullying, caused by a documentary called "The Paw Project," which focuses on declawing and casts a negative light on the veterinary profession and allied organizations for not supporting declaw bans. According to Dr. Currigan, who says her practice strongly opposes declawing as a means of addressing normal feline behavior, an unsettling aspect was that the threatening phone calls, hurtful emails, and rude Facebook posts weren't aimed just at her—they affected all the employees at her practice. Even worse, they were criticizing her practice for mistaken reasons.

"It's hard to be accused of things that are really not true. Veterinarians do so much ... we deeply care about the welfare and the lives of our patients, and we never consider doing something that's cruel or inhumane, (so) it's difficult to be accused of that," Dr. Currigan said.

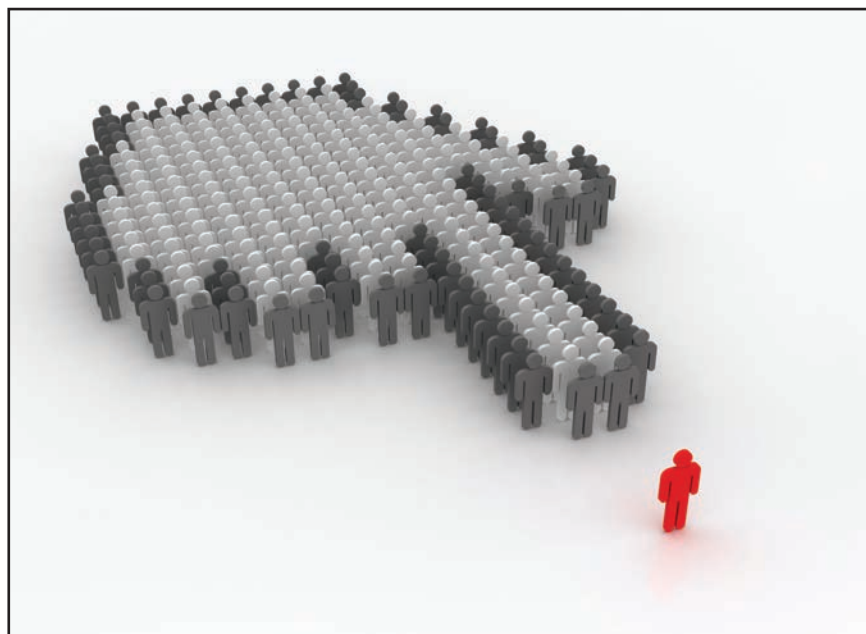
Ultimately, Dr. Currigan did not respond directly to the critics, but instead, provided additional information regarding declawing and the hospital's position on the procedure in cats on its website.

Jonathan Bernstein from Bernstein Crisis Management is no stranger to cyberbullies in the professional world.

"There have always been bullies, and the Internet has simply given bullies a new method of doing what they do. The court of law operates very slowly; the court of opinion operates instantaneously. A full day on the Internet is eons in real life," Bernstein said. "So much damage can occur in a 24-hour period that the necessity for really rapid response is critical."

According to Bernstein, shutting down social media pages may only create more problems for the business. Even after the wave of attacks is over, lingering reviews and posts can show up in online searches and continue to damage a clinic's reputation months down the road.

"The asset of any organization is its reputation. If your reputation is being damaged, then you're going to lose the ability to operate, and certainly for any business, that's the worst thing that can happen," Bernstein says.



AVMA congressional fellows take posts on Capitol Hill

Members of the newest class of AVMA Congressional Science Fellows have received their congressional office placements, the Association announced in September.

Dr. Elise Ackley has accepted a position with Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, Dr. Chase Crawford with Sen. Al Franken of Minnesota, and Dr. Carrie La Jeunesse with Rep. Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska.

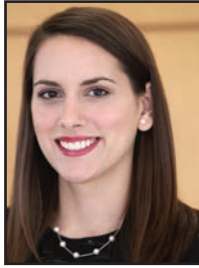
During their yearlong assignments, the AVMA fellows use their scientific expertise and training in veterinary medicine to advise their respective members of Congress on a variety of policy issues, including agriculture, animal health and welfare, appropriations, food safety, biosecurity, and public health.

"Across the nation and around the world, we are facing incredible animal and public health and environmental challenges," said Dr. Mark Lutschaunig, director of AVMA's Governmental Relations Division.

"Veterinarians like Ackley, Crawford, and La Jeunesse have a unique opportunity to use their scientific training and expertise to help our nation's leaders craft sound legislative policies that will enhance animal health and welfare, protect our food supply, promote public health, and preserve our environment for the future," Dr. Lutschaunig said.

The AVMA fellowship program is funded by the American Veterinary Medical Foundation and sponsored through the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Drs. Ackley, Crawford, and La Jeunesse will serve as full-time



Dr. Elise Ackley



Dr. Chase Crawford



Dr. Carrie La Jeunesse

employees to their members of Congress, supporting the needs and activities of their respective congressional offices, until August 2015. Dr. Ackley will concentrate on public health and higher education, Dr. Crawford primarily on agricultural issues, and Dr. La Jeunesse on international development.

AVMA seeks volunteers, award nominations

The AVMA is seeking volunteers for committees, trusts, councils, and other entities. The Association and the American Veterinary Medical Foundation also are accepting nominations for Excellence in Veterinary Medicine Awards.

Serving as a volunteer member of an AVMA entity is a way of giving back to the veterinary profession, according to veterinarians who are current volunteers. AVMA entities help develop Association policy and influence such important areas as animal welfare, clinical practice, and food safety.

Nominations were being invited for 67 vacancies at press time. The AVMA must receive nominations for committee and trust seats by Feb. 23, 2015, and nominations for councils by April 1, 2015.

Nomination materials—including forms, entity descriptions, and vacancy details—are available on the Volunteer Opportunities site, www.avma.org/Members/Volunteer. They are also available by calling AVMA headquarters at 800-248-2862, ext. 6688, or by emailing OfficeEVP@avma.org.

The Excellence in Veterinary Medicine Awards recognize contributions in areas such as organized veterinary medicine, animal welfare, and research.

The AVMA and AVMF are accepting nominations for the following awards: The AVMA Award, AVMA Meritorious Service Award, AVMA Advocacy Award, AVMA Animal Welfare Award, AVMA Humane Award, AVMA Lifetime Excellence in Research Award, AVMA Practitioner Research Award, AVMA Public Service Award, AVMA XIIth International Veterinary Congress Prize, AVMF/ AKC Career Achievement Award in Canine Research, and AVMF/Winn Feline Foundation Award.

The deadline is Feb. 1, 2015, for award nominations. Award information and nomination forms are at www.avma.org/awards. The contact for the awards is Jody Beckford, at 800-248-2862, ext. 6709, or jbeckford@avma.org.

Private practitioners look to find way forward with nonprofits

Efforts by the South Carolina Association of Veterinarians, Utah VMA, and CATalyst Council provide examples of how private practitioners are responding to nonprofits and government agencies providing veterinary services.

Representatives of the groups spoke about these efforts during the 2014 AVMA Public Policy Symposium, Sept. 5-6 in Rosemont, Illinois, a forum for leaders of state VMAs and other veterinary associations.

The South Carolina Association of Veterinarians recently suspended attempts to pass state legislation to limit veterinary services by nonprofits while further studying limiting such services.

Dr. Patricia Hill, SCAV legislative chair, said SCAV leaders have received numerous complaints about nonprofits. In one category are complaints that some nonprofits compete directly with private practices. In another category are complaints that some nonprofits provide poor-quality care.

Leaders of the Utah VMA recently discussed bringing forward state legislation in response to com-



The leadership of the South Carolina Association of Veterinarians caught state legislators between sessions at the South Carolina State House to discuss private practitioners' concerns with nonprofits providing veterinary services.

plaints by members about competition from county shelters, said Dr. Drew Allen, UVMA state legislative chair.

At the suggestion of a state legislator, the Utah VMA arranged a meeting with the Utah Association of Counties to discuss the issue. Dr. Allen said attendees ended up being able to have a very good dialogue.

Relations between private practitioners and shelters are rarely adversarial, according to a 2012 survey by the CATalyst Council. Dr. Jane Brunt, the council's executive director, shared similar results from a 2014 follow-up survey.

Dr. Brunt also spoke about Catalyst Connection. The program facilitates the handoff of veterinary care from a shelter to a private practitioner during an animal's adoption.

Winner of America's Favorite Veterinarian announced

The American Veterinary Medical Foundation has named Dr. Timothy A. Hunt of Bayshore Veterinary Clinic in Marquette, Michigan, the 2014 winner of the America's Favorite Veterinarian contest. The announcement was made Sept. 30 via www.americasfavoriteveterinarian.org.

This contest launched in May, and 20 finalists were chosen by an AVMF committee. Beginning in late July, the public was invited to vote to select the winner. The 20 finalists brought in over 86,000 votes from across the country, with Dr. Hunt receiving more than 12,000 votes to secure the title.

Dr. Hunt earned his DVM degree from Michigan State University in 1989. Dr. Hunt established Bayshore Veterinary Clinic in 1993 in Marquette, a small town of 20,000 people. The practice now employs 15 people.

In addition to his work as a small animal veterinarian, Dr. Hunt has



Dr. Timothy A. Hunt

Courtesy of Dr. Timothy A. Hunt

served three times as a veterinarian volunteer in Alaska for the Iditarod sled dog race and founded the Alaska Veterinary Rural Program, where he conducts spay-neuter clinics and provides veterinary care in impoverished villages. Dr. Hunt has also raced his own sled dogs over the past 18 years in various parts of the world, including the French Alps, Alaska for the Iditarod, and Michigan's Upper Peninsula for the UP 200 numerous times.

As America's Favorite Veterinarian, Dr. Hunt will receive a \$500 cash prize, a trip to the 2015 AVMA Annual Convention in Boston, a feature article on the AVMF website, and a community celebration at his clinic for staff and clients. Nominator Kris Mitchell will receive an animal lover's gift pack.

Students win grand prize for pet care innovation

Imagine a product that rewards pet owners for taking their dog on walks and reminds them to schedule a checkup with the veterinarian or to give the cat its heartworm pill.

Veterinary students Jamie Peisel and Katherine Watson did—and the idea won top honors and the \$10,000 grand prize as part of the first Veterinary Innovation Challenge. The challenge is an international competition sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine and the AVMA PLIT for veterinary students to showcase their business ventures that could impact the future of veterinary medicine.

The competition's panel of judges awarded first place to Peisel and Watson, third-year students at the University of California-Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, for Speak, a digital pet dog and cat collar and accompanying smartphone app.



Jamie Peisel, Nikhil Joshi (Veterinary Innovation Challenge executive director), Katherine Watson, and Dr. Linda Ellis of AVMA PLIT

Using GPS, an accelerometer, and various other technologies, Speak's collar tells pet owners and veterinarians about the pet's location and how active it has been.

The smartphone component gives breed-specific recommendations and reminders about exercise, vaccinations, teeth cleaning, and other preventive care. Users earn "care points" that can be redeemed for products from third-party pet companies.

Additionally, pet owners can use the smartphone app to view instructional videos that encourage follow-through on prescribed veterinary treatments.

Peisel said her team's goal is to have a working prototype early in 2015 and to bring the product to market next September.

Visit www.vetinnovation.com for more information about the Veterinary Innovation Challenge and the 2014 finalists.

Session delves into laws on compounding, prescriptions

The ever-changing state and federal rules governing pharmacy within veterinary medicine were the subject of a wide-ranging session during the 2014 AVMA Public Policy Symposium, Sept. 5-6 in Rosemont, Illinois, a forum for leaders of state VMAs and other veterinary associations.

Dr. Frank G. Vice, who is in the practice of human pharmacy and veterinary medicine, offered an overview of the legalities of veterinary compounding.

Dr. Ashley Morgan, an assistant director of the AVMA Governmental Relations Division, discussed attention to veterinary compounding by the federal government. An AVMA task force is developing a proposal for federal legislation to allow compounding from bulk substances in certain circumstances, anticipatory compounding, and dispensing from office stock for home use.

Leaders of state VMAs recounted successes with state rules covering veterinary compounding.

Dr. Jeff Newman, president of the Virginia VMA, spoke about the passage of Virginia legislation to allow veterinarians to dispense from office stock for home use in certain circumstances.



Photo by Verma Barnett

Dr. Frank G. Vice is in the practice of human pharmacy as well as veterinary medicine in Kentucky.

Bill Bell, executive director of the Maine VMA, described the defeat of a proposal in Maine that would have required veterinarians always to write a prescription, regardless of whether the client were to want one.

Kim Brown Pokorny, executive director of the Wisconsin VMA, summarized how veterinarians secured an exemption from Wisconsin's prescription monitoring program for controlled substances.

The session on pharmaceutical issues concluded with information on drug disposal and answers to frequently asked questions. The AVMA provides resources on drug disposal at www.avma.org/wastedisposal and www.avma.org/unwantedmeds. Resources on prescriptions and compounding are available at www.avma.org/pharmacy.

All hydrocodone products now schedule II drugs

The Drug Enforcement Administration has scheduled all hydrocodone-containing products as schedule II drugs, effective Oct. 6. Previously, hydrocodone combination products had been schedule III drugs.

In veterinary medicine, hydrocodone products are used especially in canine medicine to help control coughing and control pain. The DEA will allow refills that are dispensed before April 8, 2015, for hydrocodone combination products that were prescribed as schedule III drugs before Oct. 6.

Members of the AVMA can learn more about "Veterinary Compliance with the Controlled Substances Act

and the DEA" by visiting www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Reference.

DEA expands options for controlled substances disposal

Disposing of federally controlled substances has gotten a lot easier for animal owners and veterinarians.

Drug Enforcement Administration regulations implemented Oct. 9 now allow veterinary clients to relinquish unwanted and outdated animal drugs through take-back events, via return mail, and at designated collection locations. Disposal options for veterinarians were also expanded to include on-site destruction and easier means for returns, recalls, and reverse distribution.

The AVMA, which had been working with the DEA for less restrictive disposal regulations, welcomed the agency's decision. "This will benefit veterinarians, animal owners, and the environment alike by expanding options and reducing complications and confusion," explained Dr. Kristi Henderson, acting director of the AVMA Scientific Activities Division.

"Additionally, there should be fewer instances of controlled substances toxicoses in humans and animals, and there should be a reduction in the amount of these products entering our nation's waters," she said.

The AVMA has updated its online information to reflect the regulatory changes made by the DEA. Key resources include the following:

- The AVMA microsite "Waste Disposal by Veterinary Practices: What Goes Where?" at www.avma.org/wastedisposal. This members-only resource provides

pages on topics such as Drug and Chemical Disposal and Federal Regulation of Waste Disposal.

- www.avma.org/unwantedmeds, which is accessible by the public and provides readers with general information regarding pharmaceutical disposal and will soon have information for owners specifically on the new regulations pertaining to disposal of unwanted or expired controlled substances.

The AVMA's policy on "Client Disposal of Controlled Substances" is currently being reviewed by AVMA leadership with input from AVMA members.

APHIS finalizes restrictions on dog importation

The Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has issued a final rule, effective Nov. 17, to restrict importation of dogs into the continental United States and Hawaii for resale, veterinary treatment, or research unless the dogs are in good health, have received all necessary vaccinations, and are at least 6 months old.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 included an amendment to the Animal Welfare Act to restrict importation of certain live dogs. APHIS is implementing that amendment with this rule.

The new rule further specifies that dogs imported to the continental United States or Hawaii for resale, veterinary treatment, or research must be accompanied by an APHIS import permit, a certificate of veterinary inspection, and a rabies vaccination certificate.

The rule allows some exceptions to the health, vaccination, and age requirements for dogs coming into the country for veterinary treatment or research.

The rule also includes an exception to the 6-month age requirement for dogs imported to Hawaii from the British Isles, Australia, Guam, or New Zealand, if the dogs are not transported out of Hawaii for resale at younger than 6 months. These areas are all rabies-free. 🇺🇸

