New initiatives to support the next generation of veterinarians

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Expansion of the DVM program leveraging an innovative training approach

The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (FMV) of the Université de Montréal and Université du Québec à Rimouski have formed a partnership to create a 3+2 decentralized training program to counter the veterinary workforce shortage in the province, specifically in rural regions. Years 1 to 3 will be completed in Rimouski, year 4 at the FMV in Saint-Hyacinthe, and year 5, devoted to clinical rotations, partly at FMV’s Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH) and partly at veterinary practices in underserved areas of the province. As of 2024, 24 new seats will be available, bringing the total class size to 120, an increase of 25%. The FMV achieved a pivotal step in the development of its 3+2 program by obtaining approval from the province’s Ministry of Higher Education in May 2022 along with $101 million in funding for new infrastructures and from the AVMA’s Council on Education in October 2022. The decentralized program in veterinary medicine represents a Canadian first.

Veterinary simulation and virtual reality center

Implementation of the decentralized program in veterinary medicine will be accompanied by the establishment of a Veterinary Simulation and Virtual Reality Center (VSVRC). The VSVRC will support the following: (1) teaching the use of simulation models and VR technology, (2) self-directed learning and practice of clinical skills, (3) formative feedback and summative evaluation, (4) reduction of technical errors, and (5) student and patient safety. This center is necessary in the current context of growing societal concerns about the ethical use of animals and biosafety issues. A $1 million donation has enabled purchase of models to be used in the VSVRC. Inauguration of the center is scheduled for fall 2024 in Saint-Hyacinthe and fall 2025 in Rimouski.

A new veterinary qualification program to facilitate access to practice for veterinarians with foreign degrees

The FMV will introduce a new qualification program in veterinary medicine in 2024, allowing veterinarians who are Canadian citizens or permanent residents and who hold a degree from an educational institution that is not accredited by the AVMA/Canadian Veterinary Medical Association to complete a preparatory semester and a year of clinical practice at the FMV by enrolling in the DVM program. Candidates will then be eligible to take the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE). An application for licensure may subsequently be filed with the provincial regulatory body after successful completion of the clinical year and the NAVLE. This new program provides yet another solution to the issue of labor shortages in veterinary medicine by enabling veterinarians holding a foreign degree to practice in Quebec after only a year and a half of clinical studies.

Integration of the spectrum of care into our clinical teaching

To adapt our clinical teaching to the current challenges facing our profession, our VTH has developed a unique offer in Canada over the past few years, in terms of veterinary care for animals belonging to vulnerable clientele. This service brings together various activities, including those of the Community Medicine Service, the small animal shelter, the clinic offering veterinary services to pets of unhoused and at-risk youth, a targeted sterilization project, an assistance veterinary program for Indigenous communities, and a telemedicine service designed to support northern populations with limited or no access to veterinary services. These activities are rich in educational material and integrated throughout our 5-year curriculum. We believe it is essential to teach the next generation of veterinarians the importance of our contribution to animal health through social actions.