Reimagining the clinic and the classroom for a changing profession

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doi.org/10.2460/javma.24.02.0094
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Collaboration and innovation define clinical care and education at the University of Minnesota, particularly at the Veterinary Medical Center (VMC). For more than 75 years, the VMC has cared for both small and large animal patients, evolving into a comprehensive system of hospitals. The Lewis Small Animal Hospital, Large Animal Hospital, Piper Equine Center, and West Metro Equine Practice collectively represent the VMC's commitment to meeting the changing needs of the veterinary profession and the communities it serves.

Responding to evolving demands, the VMC has embraced innovation and collaboration to advance clinical care and redefine clinical training models. A standout example is the Small Animal Cardiology team, showcasing a model of collaboration in partnership with the UMN Medical School and external partners such as the biomedical device company Medtronic. The Cardiology team has extended its collaboration to other veterinary medicine colleges, enhancing training and expanding clinical offerings regionally. Procedures resulting from these collaborations include ValveClamp (V clamp) for mitral valve disease, transcatheter pulmonary valve replacement for congenital diseases, and increased access to pacemaker implantation.

Similarly, the Community Medicine team has pioneered innovative approaches to clinical education and training, extending the “clinical classroom” beyond traditional settings. Collaborations with partners such as the Animal Humane Society and resource-limited small animal clinics provide students with diverse clinical and communication experiences. Outreach-based partnerships with Tribal nations offer opportunities for students to serve underserved communities, gaining hands-on medical and surgical experience as well as cultural competence. An emerging innovation is the Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship rotation, which integrates VMC primary care training with community-based opportunities to enhance clinical competency across various health and wellness models.

These distinct models coexist within the University’s traditional land-grant framework, embodying a trilateral mission of service, education, and research. Situated in a university with a full complement of health sciences schools, this environment fosters rich opportunities for interdisciplinary research and interprofessional education. Learners become part of a world-class team, gaining cutting-edge experience in our dynamic profession while serving the diverse communities of the state.