Spring is fast approaching, and here at VRCC, we are excited for the warmer temperatures and fresh beginnings that come with it. Our 2017 Spring newsletter is full of information about our Cardiology, Surgery and Neurology teams, as well as upcoming events and news.

The VRCC Surgery & Orthopedics Team is pleased to highlight our two board certified anesthesiologists in the Specialty Highlight.

Check out our news and events section that includes information about our 6th annual Battle of the Vet Hospital Stars later this year, our participation at the annual Furry Scurry, and Ophthalmology’s involvement in eye exams for service dogs during the month of May.

You’ll learn more about Cardiology’s client coordinator, Sarah Warren in the Staff Highlight Section.

We hope you’ll enjoy this edition’s case study, “The Mighty Finn,” written by Dr. Stephen Lane with VRCC Neurology.

Happy Spring!
Your VRCC Team

STAFF HIGHLIGHT: CARDIOLOGY

SARAH WARREN,
Senior Client Coordinator

“The ‘glue’ that holds us all together” is how another team member recently described Sarah, the Senior Client Coordinator for Rocky Mountain Veterinary Cardiology at VRCC. A Michigan native, Sarah relocated to Colorado after obtaining a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Animal Science from Michigan State University. She began her work in the veterinary field shortly after moving to Colorado, and in 2009, she joined the cardiology team at VRCC. Ever since then, Sarah has been a familiar and friendly face to our clients and patients. In her current position, Sarah has wide-ranging responsibilities, which include helping the technical team coordinate with other specialty departments at VRCC, ensuring our clients receive friendly and compassionate service, and providing an efficient and professional referral experience for our referring veterinarians.

Regardless of which challenge she takes on, it's Sarah's compassionate nature that truly helps her connect and build relationships with our clients. She firmly believes this helps the VRCC team provide the very best experience possible. Sarah feels most fulfilled when she is able to make a difference in someone’s life despite the difficult circumstances that veterinary medicine can induce, or the sad outcomes that sometimes occur.

Sarah views the fast paced, busy environment at VRCC as energizing, and she genuinely appreciates the opportunity to learn new skills from all of her co-workers. When she’s not working, she and her husband Marcus, make the most of the Denver food and local music scene. They also love to explore the mountains with their two Bernese Mountain Dogs (Louie and Rosco) and can’t wait for a greeting from their cat, Ceaser Pilache, when they return home.

SPECIALTY HIGHLIGHT: SURGERY & ORTHOPEDICS

At VRCC Surgery & Orthopedics, we are proud to be one of the few veterinary hospitals to have the expertise of two nationally board certified anesthesiologists on our team to help serve you and your clients. Dr. Kurt Grimm, and Dr. Etta Wertz, together cover Monday – Friday, 7 am – 5pm

VRCC will be hosting a Spring CE on Wednesday, April 19th at the Denver Zoo. The event will start at 6pm for registration, with dinner and lectures to follow. Lectures in: Ophthalmology, Oncology, Internal Medicine and Cardiology will be presented. Before registration and lectures, explore the Denver Zoo from 4pm-6pm with complimentary admission! Due to limited space, this CE is open to DVMs only at this time. Please RSVP to Ruby Post at 303-874-2053 or rpost@vrcc.com. Registration for this event is on a first-come first-served basis. Reserve your spot today!
vrcc news & events

kurt grimm, dvm, ms, phd, diplomate of the american college of veterinary anesthesiologists and diplomate of the american college of veterinary clinical pharmacology is a former assistant professor of anesthesiology and pain management at the university of illinois college of veterinary medicine. he earned his dvm from iowa state university in 1995 and later his ms and phd from the university of illinois. he is co-editor of several texts including pain management for the small animal practitioner and lumb and jones’ veterinary anesthesia and analgesia, 4th edition.

etta wertz, dvm, ms, diplomate of the acvaa, cva is a native coloradoan and grew up in denver. she graduated from colorado state university and completed a small animal internship at the university of missouri-columbia. she completed a residency in anesthesiology and a master’s degree at the university of illinois. she is a diplomate member in the college of veterinary anesthesiologists. she was a faculty anesthesiologist at cornell university and csu. dr. wertz has also completed ivas training in acupuncture and became certified in 1999.

case study: neurology

“the mighty finn”
by dr. stephen lane, bs, dvm, diplomate acvm (neurology/neurosurgery)

finn is a 3-year-old, male neutered, shepherd mix who presented to the vrcc, and rock mountain veterinary neurology (rmvn). the owners had a concern that finn had suffered throat trauma after being attacked by a staffordshire terrier three days previous. finn was having trouble keeping food and water down after eating.

while the owner did not see obvious skin wounds on the neck, finn had been coughing and retching, and on occasion, making a gurgling sound after the attack. finn was also having trouble lying on his side when at rest and was spending most of his time in a sternal position. initial assessment at his family veterinarian resulted in appropriate laboratory testing for mild dehydration. referral ensued.

on presentation to rmvn, physical examination revealed mild dehydration. neurological examination was normal when finn was rested. repetitive palpebral stimulation resulted in decrementation of this reflex. gaiting was characterized by exercise-induced weakness characterized by inability to extend either pelvic limb followed by trembling and collapse. with a few minutes rest, finn was able to walk again only to repeat this exercise-induced weakness and collapse. thoracic radiographs were taken to evaluate the size of his esophagus. these revealed a generalized dilated esophagus and focal alveolar lung disease in the right cranial lung lobe. based upon the exam findings, a primary junctionopathy with esophageal hypomotility and secondary aspiration pneumonia was diagnosed. acetylcholine receptor (achr) antibody testing was submitted.

finn was admitted for supportive fluid therapy and combination intravenous antibiotic treatment. edrophonium hydrochloride challenge was performed. a strong positive response with finn returning to a normal motor and strength status for 4 minutes was identified. based upon all results, a junctionopathy was diagnosed. acquired myasthenia gravis was suspected. neostigmine, a parenteral acetyl-cholinesterase inhibitor was introduced. in addition, dexamethasone and leflunomide were added to this treatment approach. during hospitalization, finn demonstrated a slow but positive response to treatment. finn was eating and drinking without regurgitation or weakness when walking or exercised. finn was discharged to his family with a stable status.

acquired junctionopathies such as acquired myasthenia gravis, are diseases of the immune system where the body attacks the tissues it should be protecting. these tissue destructions involve antibodies that destroy muscle receptors for neurotransmission on the muscle membrane, achr proteins. this results in the removal of these receptors and the loss of continued muscle strength and function. there are several types of cancer including thymoma, carcinoma, and cutaneous lymphoma that have been associated with paraneoplastic-acquired myasthenia gravis. these cancers account for less than 1% of the causes in animals.

the goal of treatment is to preserve acetylcholine receptors and their function. this is done with immunomodulants and the use of acetyl-cholinesterase inhibitors. neostigmine is used in the acute phase of treatment as a systemic treatment avoiding the oral route of therapy where an enlarged and dysfunctional esophagus remains the barrier for all medications to be digested and absorbed.

patients that demonstrate a positive response to neostigmine therapy are transitioned to oral therapy with the use of pyridostigmine or mestinon. immunomodulant therapy has commonly been used to treat junctionopathies in addition to the acetyl-cholinesterase inhibitors. several immunomodulants have been reported for use such as prednisone/prednisolone, dexamethasone, azathioprine, leflunomide and cyclosporine. the use of glucocorticoid therapy such as prednisone or dexamethasone in the initial stages of therapy is controversial. enhanced neuromuscular dysfunction and immunosuppression are augmented against these agents during the initial stages of therapy.

finn remained hospitalized for two weeks. when finn was initially started on neostigmine, administered sub-cutaneously every 8 hours. this failed to maintain neuromuscular strength and esophageal function. neostigmine was increased to every 6 hours and finn demonstrated a positive response. the dose and the frequency were decreased as leflunomide and dexamethasone were added to treatment regimen. finn was discharged to his family with normal strength and function and a cookbook of safety measures to prevent aspiration pneumonia. finn’s owners constructed a luxury “bailey chair” where he enjoys all of his meals and water intake. this chair helps in the transport of water and food through his esophagus from his mouth to his stomach.

vrcc news & events

mark your calendars! sunday, september 10th, 2017 is the 6th annual battle of the vet hospital stars! registration opens in june, so keep a look out to be a part of the colorado veterinary community’s largest funraising, team-building and networking event.

furry scurry is on saturday, may 6th at wash park in denver, and we are proud to be a sponsor for our 16th year! stop by to see us, and step into our photo booth with your pet!

we will be sending more and more updates digitally to clinics and hospitals. do we have your correct email address? please send a message to rpost@vrcc.com to ensure that you are on the email list, with the correct address to stay up to date with the happenings at vrcc!

our ophthalmology department is proud to once again be participating in free service dog eye exams during the 2017 acvo national service animal exam event taking place throughout the month of may. visit acvo.com for more details or call vrcc ophthalmology at 303-874-2070.

Specialty Highlight . . . Continued