

Veterinary Evidence Student Awards 2023 podcast

Kit Sturgess, Rebecca Hearne and Rachel Garrett

Kit Sturgess

Hi, it's a great pleasure for me to be here today talking to two excellent winners of our Student Awards, who both produced Knowledge Summaries. My name is Kit Sturgess, I'm Editor-in-Chief of *Veterinary Evidence* and today we have Rachel and Rebecca.

So, what I'd like to do first is to ask each of you to introduce yourselves and just give us a very brief idea of what motivated you to take part in doing a competition which required quite a bit of work on top of all your studies.

So, if we start with Rebecca.

Rebecca Hearne

We had to write a Knowledge Summary as part of our final year course work, which I submitted and got quite a good grade on it and was encouraged by the team at university to submit it.

So yeah, that was what I did that was all my motivation for doing it.

Kit Sturgess

And why that particular subject?

Was that something that was suggested or something you'd experienced during your time in practice?

Rebecca Hearne

So it was something that I experienced during my time in practice, there was a bit of a discrepancy between ECP commissions about the use of prazosin in the blocked cats. So, yeah, I decided to look into it a bit more and noticed there were a couple of papers on it. And then yes, I decided to write a Knowledge Summary on that.

Kit Sturgess

Excellent. Thank you.

And Rachel, how about you?

Where are you at now and how did you decide on your topic?

Rachel Garrett

So, similar to Rebecca, my degree at the University of Sydney has a research component where all students write a research paper of their choosing, and through that I found out about *Veterinary Evidence*.

And because I had already put a lot of work into it, it was something that, you know, I was proud of and I was happy with. I sort of thought I might as well go the extra step of publication and I think it ended up being a really valuable experience for me from that.

Kit Sturgess

And your paper was on the use of feline recombinant interferon in FIV, which is a subject dear to my heart, as that was my PhD.

Why that?

Do you have personal experience of cats with their FIV?

I mean, I know they're much more prevalent in Australia.

Rachel Garrett

Yes.

So, I was very interested in feline retroviral diseases, and right before I wrote that paper, I had a friend whose cat was diagnosed with FIV and I think there are a lot of parallels drawn between FIV and HIV.

So, I was sort of interested in the different treatment options because for HIV, there's like a range of antivirals and interferons that people use, but for FIV at uni, they sort of just told us supportive care and you know and no real targeted treatment.

So, I think I was really interested in whether there was an efficacious targeted treatment with interferons that you could use and what the evidence was behind it.

Kit Sturgess

And that's excellent, I mean that's really where we drive the journal, it's those questions that you may have received information both on the use of prazosin in a blocked cat, or the use of recombinant only interferon and you really feel, actually, I don't know, some people are saying one thing, other people are saying something different and where does the evidence sit?

And those are both brilliant examples of what we're trying to achieve as a journal, so that's fantastic.

And just moving on now, you know it's a bit of a scary thing to put in a publication and receive a peer-review and feedback.

So, Rachel, how was that for you?

Do you think it was supportive?

Did you find it really scary and you'll never do it again?

Rachel Garrett

I thought all of the feedback was done in a really constructive way and there were like questions I have had about a few things and I think Jennifer was sort of sick of receiving my emails after a while, but all of my questions were answered very clearly and it was all a very amicable process.

There wasn't anything scary about it, so it was not as daunting as I thought it might be.

Kit

And how about you, Rebecca?

Rebecca Hearne

I very much agree with what Rachel said, I sent a lot of emails to Jennifer, and Jennifer was very, very patient with me and it made it a bit less daunting.

Sort of any questions that I had she answered really quickly and clarified everything, so yeah.

Kit Sturgess

And do you feel better able, Rebecca, in the future, to just do another piece of work, do you feel a bit more comfortable with the review process?

Rebecca Hearne

It would make me motivated to do another one, maybe not straight away.

Kit Sturgess

And Rachel, how about you?

Have you got plans for further publications sometime in the future?

Rachel Garrett

I think for me I'm not currently in a research mindset, but I still found the experience really valuable to give me the tools if in the future I do want to publish again, it's even just in clinical practice if you want to look at the evidence base behind something, I feel like doing the whole process of a Knowledge Summary and having to critically analyse the papers that you are looking at has given me really good tools to look at a paper and then be able to think, OK, is this like strong or weak evidence?

So, either way... even I'm not sure if I will publish a lot more in the future, but either way I think it's been valuable for me even just as a clinician.

Kit Sturgess

Yes.

And Rachel, how did you find the evidence in terms of the quality of the evidence that we have for much of what we try and do in veterinary practice?

Did you find that evidence there was a lot of it, or it was quite weak?

Rachel Garrett

For my paper, it's sort of a niche research area, so there were only three papers that were specific to my question and a lot of them had like very small sample sizes and limitations that I had to delve into.

And I think that's true for most of, pretty much almost all veterinary papers.

And it's not because people don't want to provide the strongest evidence possible.

It's just sometimes there's limitations with funding and sample sizes and recruiting patients for your samples.

So, sometimes it can be a bit frustrating, but I think you can still get good knowledge from the papers that you're reading, and if you can critically analyse them to find out how strong the evidence is, then they're still very helpful in a lot of ways.

Kit Sturgess

Thank you.

And Rebecca, again, you picked quite a controversial subject treatment of blocked cats, and did you find similar or did you feel the evidence was reasonably strong in your paper?

Rebecca Hearne

Yeah, I think I came to the same conclusion that all the evidence was weak for various reasons.

So, sample sizes, study designs and things like that but again, there was a lot of information to be gained from reading those papers and putting it all together.

Kit Sturgess

Yes.

And it's a sad fact, I'm afraid, that, funding for veterinary studies is quite limited and that does impact the quality of the evidence we have to work with.

But the new generation of vets like yourselves, this is where we need to push for, you know, more funding, better quality studies so that our evidence is better.

And Rebecca, you were University of Surrey.

What sort of support and did you get from the university?

Do you feel that was quite good for your endeavours in writing a Knowledge Summary?

Rebecca Hearne

Yeah, I felt the support was really good.

So we have a few research modules throughout our time studying and then when it came to actually submitting it, as I say, it was one of the final year team that encouraged me to submit the Knowledge Summary and gave me some guidance on how to edit a few bits before submitting it as well.

Kit Sturgess

So that was good that they sort of supported you and encouraged you rather than you actually having to go out and try and find people to help.

Rebecca Hearne

Yeah.

Kit Sturgess

And, Rachel you're from University of Sydney, so the other side of the world, but was that a similar sort of experience you had in terms of support?

Rachel Garrett

Yes.

So, last year, when I originally wrote this paper, just as part of my university research module, I had a supervisor that I was like bouncing ideas back and forth with, and she was one of the people who told me about *Veterinary Evidence* and the Student Awards. So, she helped me, you know, find the Knowledge Summary template and sort of tailor my paper to that template.

When it came to this year, I didn't converse as much with my supervisor, so when it came to the editing process with *Veterinary Evidence*, it was more of just me and my computer with my emails from you guys.

But I still found the experience quite easy and straightforward. It wasn't too daunting. Like I said before.

Kit Sturgess

And apart from learning about the subject area, Rachel, what else do you feel you've gained from actually having taken part in the writing the Knowledge Summary and entering this competition?

Rachel Garrett

I think this has given me really good skills in just critically analysing papers.

Throughout the year when I've had questions during my final year placements about the efficacy of certain things and what the evidence is behind them, now that I've put a lot of time into writing my own Knowledge Summary and critically appraising all of these different papers for my own research topic, I can apply that to other areas and it really helps me a lot and also just having the chance to publish something as a student I think is a really exciting thing.

So it's been good in that way as well.

Kit Sturgess

Excellent.

And Rebecca, one of the things that we often get accused of in academia and in real life practices, is just reading the abstracts and not reading the paper.

And I was quite interested in how you felt the abstract that you read, how well that actually conveyed the true information that was in the paper?

Did you feel they were quite good, or did you feel that actually when you read the paper, your conclusion was a bit different?

Rebecca Hearne

I'd say that's mixed. A few of the papers that I read, there was a bit of extra information that was actually quite useful and sort of looking at other things like the side effects and things like that, which were all helpful in understanding and the use of the drug.

But the abstract gave quite a good summary of the preliminary results and the main results that the paper was looking at.

And so yeah, I found that it was useful, but reading the whole paper gave me a bit of a better understanding.

Kit Sturgess

Yeah.

And that's, I suppose, that's always the thing is, is whether you walk away with the same confidence in the information that the abstract contains, and having read the paper, which is always a good plug for everyone to read the paper, not just the abstract. Just so going forward from that, I mean, Rebecca, if somebody came up to you, you know, somebody you knew from, Surrey, saying, you know, I've seen the competition, I'm thinking of entering, what sort of advice would you give them about how things that you felt might have made your life easier, or things that you felt really work well for you?

Rebecca Hearne

I'd encourage them to, to go for it.

It was, once I got my head around, it was quite a simple process, which we were very well guided through and I was quite bad in sort of not replying in late replies because I thought in my head it was going to be a lot more work than what it was so sort of seeing the comments and everything and thinking oh this is going to take me a long time when actually the comments were really clear and it was really easy to make those edits and change the paper and yeah.

So yeah, I'd say just actually read, read the comments, read the replies, and it's not as much work as expected.

Kit Sturgess

And Rebecca, what did you feel was the hardest thing in the whole, you know, choosing your topic, writing the thing and getting it to publication?

Rebecca Hearne

I think the hardest bit at first was sort of finding the papers and then finding the information in the papers, which was the most relevant.

And as I said before about sort of the side effects and things like that, which don't necessarily relate to the PICO question but for when I submitted it to university, included all of all of that in there and then trying to sort of take out the bits that weren't actually relevant before submitting it was probably the hardest bit.

Kit Sturgess

Thank you.

And, Rachel, sort of, you know, what would your recommendation be if you were approached, you know, did it take up a huge amount of your time or was it something that you could manage in amongst all the other demands of being a student and doing a busy degree course?

Rachel Garrett

I think there are so many resources that are actually provided on the *Veterinary Evidence* website that even before I applied for the student awards, it's not as complicated as I thought it would be.

The template that you use for the Knowledge Summaries is very straightforward and so I think I would tell someone just to go for it and if they've got an interest in publishing, especially if it's something similar to me and, Rebecca, where we already have a research component in our degree where we have to write a paper of some sorts anyway, if you've already halfway there, why not go the extra step?

And I thought it was a really valuable and interesting experience for me.

Kit Sturgess

And I'm really pleased that it was and do you think it will have some benefit in your career?

Do you think when you've applied for positions, people have been impressed by the fact you have got a publication already under your belt?

Rachel Garrett

I think it's definitely, if you're looking at it from a career standpoint, most students don't have a publication, a lot of vets don't have a publication so I think it is a valuable thing to have.

You know you can put it on your resume and it's exciting as well to like, tell your friends and family.

Kit Sturgess

And how about you, Rebecca?

Do you feel that made any difference to your current position or do you just feel a bit more confident in yourself in the assessing evidence?

Rebecca Hearne

Definitely gave me more confidence and yeah, just more, more confidence in myself and my ability to assess evidence and to use other people's Knowledge Summaries as well.

Now that I sort of understand them, understand the process when I'm not sure about something, looking at the *Veterinary Evidence* website, and looking for an A knowledge summary on it to give me that better understanding.

And that's kind of what it's giving me.

Kit Sturgess

The and that's really important to know that there are quite a lot of Knowledge Summaries on the website now and so that's great.

And again, just to remind everyone who might be listening, even if you have an idea and you have no intention of writing a paper, we have a list of questions, PICO questions for people to answer.

So if you are working and you think oh that would be really interesting if somebody could answer that for me, then that's also contributing.

So that's fantastic.

So I just want to wrap this up now.

It's been delightful speaking to you, I'm it gives me great confidence.

I'm coming to the end of my career.

I've been doing this for quite some time to know that the profession is in really capable

hands You know people who are interested in the subject are really going to make a difference and point out to me all the things that I've been doing for years that weren't actually evidence based and need to change.

So it's been great talking to you and thank you very much for giving us your time.

Rebecca Hearne

Thank you.

Rachel Garrett

Thank you.

Our transcripts and closed captions are generated manually and automatically. Every effort has been made to transcribe accurately. The accuracy depends on the audio quality, topic, and speaker. If you require assistance, or something doesn't seem quite right, please contact ebvm@rcvsknowledge.org



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/). This information is provided for use for educational purposes. We do not warrant that information we provide will meet animal health or medical requirements.

It is ok to: share, discuss and learn! You can share this resource with your teams, colleagues, and organisations with credit to RCVS Knowledge and the author where appropriate. You can share downloadable links on your socials and within internal networks.

It is not ok to: edit, change, or add to this resource, or claim it as your own. Although you are welcome to use it and reference it, you should not copy and paste it in its entirety. You should always provide a link back to this online resource. You may not use it for commercial purposes, for example, charging for its use, providing it behind a paywall, or providing it as part of a paid-for subscription service.

You should reference this resource like this: RCVS Knowledge (2024). *Veterinary Evidence Student Awards 2023* podcast. [Online] Available at (<https://rcvsknowledge.podbean.com/>)