"Veterinary Education in **SRI LANKA** at the time of Covid-19"

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science University of Peradeniya

Nayana Wijayawardhane, PhD

Professor in Veterinary Clinical Sciences

OBJECTIVES

- To determine the impact of COVID-19 in providing quality veterinary education in Sri Lanka

- To compare the learning set up of Sri Lanka in their current COVID-19 situation from the previous year.

- To share an update on the learning set up of Sri Lanka, including innovative approaches to address various challenges.

Theoretical Content Delivery
The Problems

- **Most immediate changes** introduced at the beginning of the pandemic:

  - Cancellation of all face-to-face teaching and replacement it with online content (Emergency Remote Teaching).

  - No policy on online teaching in university system

- Prominent differences between preparing to teach face-to-face and online;

  - Online education is usually curated and developed using the ADDIE model (analyse, design, develop, implement, and evaluate) which **takes a significant amount of time**.

  - Given the urgency of the challenge at the beginning of Pandemic, **a more 'cut and paste' approach** for providing content to students in the short term was employed by many faculties

  - The precise impact of "online" delivery of didactic teaching of veterinary curriculum is yet to be determined

Many limitations of online lessons:

- **<u>Teaching practical skills</u>**, which are important veterinary competencies.

- Negative impacts of the pandemic on students outside classroom such as **<u>psychological and financial status.</u>**

- Despite the taught content being largely identical, teachers felt there was a **<u>loss of the collaborative experience</u>** for students when teaching goes online.

- This is a significant drawback with the benefits of attending classes in person such as **real time feedback and sense of engage with community**

- Students are required time to transition to online learning, gain the discipline to **work to a home-based schedule and avoid screen fatigue**

Many limitations of online lessons (contd.):

- Infrastructure in place to adapt to these changes quickly: **Moodle as the online learning management software**
  - familiar to some faculty staff.
  - Familiarization took a <u>few months of training and doing</u> which was welcome by most of the faculty.
- Compared to clinical training, pre-clinical (basic sciences) syllabi was delivered online in a more systematic fashion
- However, recording those lectures on the existing timetable to self-directed learning resources were not adequate for student engagement.
- Their appropriateness and acceptance by students and educators:
  - depend on the subject of interest and the infrastructure available.
  - For certain subjects students got rapidly adopted during the pandemic
- Use of pre-recorded lectures (with the benefit of avoiding network issues during live streaming) – asynchronise teaching
- Some subjects complemented this by a flipped classroom approach (using audiovisual conferencing and student polling)
  - ✓ Benefits of the flipped classroom:
    - improved engagement
    - a better use of time and enhanced student-faculty contact

Many limitations of online lessons (contd.):

- The notion of delivering content almost <u>completely online: seemed to be daunting</u>
    - But when considered in the context of the generation being educated, it was not so problematic as it first appeared.

- Promisingly, <u>better attendance, engagement, and feedback</u> has been reported by faculty

- some **students** reported that <u>online education is more convenient, time-saving, and flexible for them.</u>

- **Video lectures** were largely well received by students.
    - <u>allowed greater convenience</u>
    - <u>Flexibility</u>
    - <u>control over the learning for the student.</u>

- Presence of **visual teacher** (live or not), in video content: seemed to be anecdotally somewhat important.
    - Students appreciated <u>time for online chat at the end of the session</u> (again, whether a pre-recorded or live session) to discuss topics and ask questions.
    - <u>storytelling and personal anecdotes, jokes, keeping the session light-hearted</u> were appreciated.

Many limitations of online lessons (contd.):

Video lectures

- students felt more involved and can interact with peers and educators in real time during live teaching.

- encouraging discussion after the delivery of teaching

    Educators and moderators of the discussion

    - make the ground rules explicit before starting the session

        - encourage everyone to contribute

        - build an environment of trust and respect, prepare to accept challenge.

- Students have expressed worries

    - virtual delays or clashing with other speakers online, as there are fewer visual clues than during face-to-face discussion.

- **covering clinical knowledge content-** case discussions were an obvious way to <u>refresh and integrate clinical knowledge.</u>

    - Discussions worked best when details of the clinical picture was released to students in stages with tutor facilitated development of clinical reasoning skills along It.

    - We felt this was a better option to teach clinical teaching during the pandemic where case access is limited.

Practical and Clinical Skills Education:

- Frequent rotations between specialties and veterinary clinics:

  o rendered students potential vectors for Covid-19 virus.

    ✓ **In small animal practice:** consultation rooms and theatres required staff to work in close and continuous proximity with each other

    ✓ **In large animal practice:** Ambulatory vehicles provide a close contact

- Clients presented unknown entities with respect to infection risk and students potential vectors for Covid-19 virus.

Practical and Clinical Skills Education:

Disadvantages of the pandemic:

- Reduced real-life experience for students

- Reduced case exposure that is worked up in real-time

- Difficult to progress with practical skill development in authentic settings and enculturation is essentially impossible to achieve remotely.

- Although we managed to maintain development of verbal communication skills with online role play and simulation, non-verbal skills were difficult to use without being face-to-face.

- Potential, unavoidable extended BVSc course

- Delayed graduation

- Although this has not come to fruition yet, it could result in increasing pressure on their families

- Pressures on an already stretched workforce, as fewer new graduates join that academic year

- Cancelled/postponed examinations and assistantship placements-significantly <u>affected students' feeling of preparedness for the transition from student to doctor</u>

The Mitigating Approaches for clinical and practical teaching:

- Given the proximity required between clinical instructors and students for the supervision of practical tasks involving in real patients

- Managed to find time for in-person clinical teaching:

  - by completing all the lectures during lockdown/closure

  - however certain conditions/cases became purely observational.

- practical consolidation weeks when students return:

  - to consolidate the theory that they are currently learning

The Mitigating Approaches for assessments:

Adjust the assessment of veterinary students in some areas

Eg., Traditional assessment methods:

- ✓ written papers in exam halls – still going on with steps taken for social distancing

- ✓ objective structured clinical examinations (OSCE): no longer practical for large groups of students.

- ✓ Workplace assessments are challenging :

    - o as clinician assessors face their own struggles with providing a service to clients and patients

    - o still trying manage with the available cases having an independent assessor for student evaluation

- **Huge administrative task:**

    - to organise the infrastructure to deal with the change for both assessments and also graduation ceremonies

    - organizing fall back options, if students become ill/COVID positive during clinical rotations or during examinations

- **Online exams:** Plans are underway for assessments that can be delivered online

    - o a secure platform

    - o to use a potential online proctoring systems for pharmacology.

    - o Together with close proctoring and invigilation system

    - o randomizing both the question and option order

The Mitigating Approaches for assessments (contd.):

For PG study programmes:

- Exams are open book in the absence of proctoring

- Thus, preparation of questions should be :

  - not easily answerable using the internet

  - used to test higher-order thinking, knowledge application, and problem solving

Limitations:

- No robust technology and network

  - to cope with the demands of high-volume, synchronous use

Key performance indicators (KPI):

- Pandemic would affect the KPI of the study programme:
  - student dropout
  - time to graduation
  - withdrawals from examinations
  - the number of attempts required to pass examinations are likely to be affected by the pandemic.

- Burden would be comparatively less on students since university education in Sri Lanka is provided free of charge.

Student support systems

- Counselling

- Student mentoring by Faculty members

- Financial support for needy students

- Minimize psychological stress-
  - Extra curricular/ entertainment activities

  E.g.,
    - Student talent show- awarded cash prizes
    - Photographic contests

CONCLUSIONS

- <u>Widely available vaccine and health and safety measures would help to support confidence :</u>
  These projections start from the assumption that renewed virus outbreaks remain contained, and that the prospect of a widely available vaccine towards the end of 2021 helps to support confidence.

- <u>Lecture free final year programme once the students return</u>

THANK YOU