

The 2nd AAVS Virtual Meeting on Veterinary Education in the time of COVID-19

— Coping mechanisms and recovery plans from “learning and teaching loss” in the new normal



Meeting Report

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many aspects of our lives, including education. Many universities around the world have introduced online learning. Yet, there are many limitations of online lessons including teaching practical skills, which are important veterinary competencies. Further, negative impacts of the pandemic on students outside the classroom such as psychological and financial status have been reported. AAVS Members could learn from each other’s experiences and discuss potential solutions to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on veterinary education and take advantage of innovations.

In January 2021, the first virtual meeting for AAVS Members was organized to provide a forum for AAVS Members to share and discuss experiences, challenges, and solutions related to delivering veterinary education in the current COVID-19 situation. AAVS organized the second virtual meeting in January 21, 2022 on the related topic with a focus on coping mechanisms and recovery plans from “teaching and learning loss” due to the COVID-19 situation. Zoom platform was used.

OBJECTIVES

- To determine the impact of COVID-19 in providing the quality veterinary education in AAVS Members 2 years after the emergence of COVID-19.
- To compare the learning set up of AAVS Members in their current COVID-19 situation from the previous year.
- To share innovative approaches to address various challenges among Members.

MEETING SUMMARY

Seventy-five (75) participants representing 32 different institutions in 14 different countries were able to join in the 2nd AAVS virtual meeting on veterinary education in the time of COVID-19. The 2nd virtual meeting was organized following the meeting agenda (**Appendix 1**).

Dr. Virginia Venturina, the dean of Central Luzon State University – College of Veterinary Medicine, the president of the Philippines Association of Veterinary Educators and Schools, and an AAVS executive member, was the moderator of this meeting.

Welcome Remarks

Dr. Abdul R. Omar, dean of the faculty of Veterinary Medicine of Universiti Putra Malaysia and the current president of AAVS, welcomed the members to the 2nd AAVS virtual meeting on veterinary education. He noted that in the past two years living with covid-19, schools and workplace setup have improved. Many started using a hybrid approach and back to having physical meetings. However, as the new variant emerged, increasing cases gave new challenges. In this meeting, the AAVS members were given an opportunity to share their best practices to ensure veterinary education. He thanked the members for attending and wished to have an important and fruitful discussion.

Summary of the Pre-meeting Questionnaire

The highlights of the pre-meeting questionnaire were presented by Jehmille Myka V. Federico, a graduating veterinary medicine student of the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture in the Philippines and an intern of OIE Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific supporting AAVS activities. The findings are summarized in **Appendix 2**.

Experience Sharing by the AAVS Members

The four faculty members of the different institutions of different countries were given an opportunity to be a resource speaker to share their institution’s experience, best practices, and plans in delivering veterinary education.

They were asked to cover the following topics:

- A brief overview of the COVID-19 situation in your country
- How your institution has adapted delivery of didactic course – challenges and solutions (e.g., permanent adaptation by incorporation of online courses)
- How your institution has adapted practical training – challenges and solutions (e.g., “crash courses” when COVID-19 situations improved)
- Challenges and solutions outside classrooms (e.g., student and faculty safety and health, internships)

University/Institution	Country	Resource Speaker	Links
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine & Animal Science, University of Peradeniya	Sri Lanka	Prof. Nayana Wijayawardhane	PDF Video
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Universiti Putra Malaysia	Malaysia	Associate Prof. Hazilawati Binti Hamzah	PDF Video

College of Veterinary Medicine, University of the Philippines, Los Banos	Philippines	Prof. Jemie Acorda, Dean	PDF Video
School of Veterinary Medicine, Hokkaido University	Japan	Prof. Yoshihiro Sakoda	PDF Video

Comment/s

Dr. Anil, the dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Sri Lanka, commented that some of the missing practical/clinical orientation during undergrad studies are planned to conduct during a mandatory internship after graduation.

Question and Answer

Question #1: Dr. Grisnarong Wongbandue asked how to manage the hands-on class if a student contracted COVID-19.

Answer/s:

- Dr. Jemie Acorda answered he had not experienced it since they have not conducted face-to-face classes. However, they plan to require the students to be vaccinated against COVID-19. They also need to undergo an RT-PCR test before entering the campus or get tested every three (3) days using an antigen test. If the students have contracted the virus, the university health service will facilitate the students to undergo quarantine for 21 days inside an isolation facility in the dormitory and do contact tracing. The students will be allowed to come back depending on the result.
- Associate Prof. Hazilawati Binti Hamzah said that some of the students contracted COVID-19 during the clinical practice. The university followed the standard procedure then rescheduled the student's clinical practice later.
- Prof. Yoshihiro Sakoda said that the university should do contact tracing. The students can attend an online class even for practical class while clinical rotation is postponed and moved to the following months.

Semi-structured Plenary Discussion

Dr. Virginia Venturina facilitated the plenary discussion focusing on coping mechanisms from learning and teaching loss in the new normal based on the summary of the pre-meeting questionnaire. All the participants were encouraged to join the discussion either by opening their microphones or typing it on the chatbox.

The following are the suggested topics to guide the plenary discussion:

Topic #1: Learning/teaching Loss

- Have you done any systematic assessment if there was any learning loss (students) and teaching loss (faculty) during and post covid?
- Which factor/s have contributed to these?
 - Online modality is not engaging for learners
 - Materials available are inadequate, non-accessible,
 - Teachers are not prepared
 - Limited interaction with co-learners
 - Socio-economic situation
- Have there been interventions made to address this?

Comment/s:

- From Dr. Zaneb Hafsa, they conducted the survey when they were still developing the online teaching and learning policy during the beginning of the pandemic. The students commented that professors had difficulty engaging virtually with them during synchronous meetings. It was only a knowledge enhancement even though the subject was supposed to be skill development. The professors were enrolled in specialized programs to improve online teaching. The survey has helped the professors and the students remodel the teaching and learning policy.
- From Dr. Abdul R. Omar, their university tries to get the minimum requirement for students, and they communicate with the veterinary counsel to address challenges. Some strategies include doing all the lecture classes online and moving practical and clinical rotations later in the semester.
- From Dr. Hazilawati Hamzah, hybrid teaching and learning approach for students to be more engaged.
- From Dr. Grisnarong Wongbandue, on the lecture part, approximately only 20% of institute instructors had a good adjustment for an online class (in teaching and learning activities) in the early stage of the COVID-19 outbreak. The 50% has gradually changed to meet the appropriate online activities after the first year of the outbreak. The remaining 30% need to do conventional lectures as they used to, but only performed by an online platform. (limitation of IT skills, stress from abrupt changes, and uncertain situations).
- From Dr. Kan Kledmanee, she commented that it's not just giving more assignments for self-directed learning. Still, the most important thing is promoting students' motivation in seeking, searching, and improving their knowledge with the professor's coaching.

Topic #2: Online Activities

- Can online activities simulate or complement the face-to-face teaching/learning of laboratory classes and internships?
- How to make online learning more engaging?

Comment/s:

- From Dr. Jasni Sabri, there are challenges on how professors would set the question during online assessments. There should be a standard to justify the quality of veterinary education.

The students' camera is beyond the professor's control, so it is hard to know if they are honest.

- Dr. Virginia Venturina added that it is the professor's responsibility to encourage the students to see the importance of learning and not just passing.
- From Dr. Nayana Wijayawardhane, they haven't successfully held online examinations for all the subjects. They hold examinations, with the permission of the university, for mainly lecture subjects.
- From Dr. Prof. Yoshihiro Sakoda, in their universities, the students can decide if they will take the exam online or face-to-face, provided that the university approves it. As for the online quizzes, they provide enough questions to avoid students searching for the answers.
- From Dr. Sithixay Kaylath, online teaching is better for lectures, and quizzes should be given after class.
- From Dr. Sandie Siew Shean Choong, their university developed an online platform for teaching and learning even before COVID-19. At that time, we were very much encouraged to practice blended learning. When COVID-19 hits, all were forced to utilize the platform fully. Asynchronous teaching requires activities like a quiz for attendance to be counted. She also added that using Kahoot for interactive quizzes but it does not apply to all students.
- From Dr. Jezie Acorda, professors face challenges in online assessment because not all students have access to computers and internet connections.

Topic #3: AAVS Activities

- Suggestions for effective teaching resource sharing
- Suggestions for online lecture series

Comment/s:

- Dr. Maho Urabe gave a refresher on accessing the different resources in the AAVS website later in the meeting.

AAVS Updates

Dr. Takeshi Haga, the AAVS Secretary General from the University of Tokyo, presented AAVS updates since the [General Assembly](#) last September. The update includes the AAVS active members as of January 18 and the [2nd issue of AAVS newsletter "AAVS Post"](#) issued on December 15, 2021, with the help of Wei Shih, an OIE intern from National Taiwan University. The establishment of AAVS working group, the Veterinary Education Research (VER), and the Veterinary Education Enhancement (VEE), chaired by Dr. Hafsa Zaneb and Dr. Abdul Rahman Omar, respectively.

Dr. Maho Urabe briefly demonstrated the AAVS member's platform. The members were encouraged to share any information that could interest other Members. The AAVS office will post any key information about upcoming events, working groups, and teaching resource sharing

on the AAVS member's platform. The teaching resource sharing is also found in the AAVS member's platform, where members can share and see the information of other members.

Closing Remarks

The Vice-president of AAVS, Dr. Fang-Chia Chang of the National Taiwan University, gave the closing remarks for this meeting. He wished everyone a wonderful 2022 new year. He said that the AAVS executive committee hopes to standardize the curriculum in Veterinary education in Asia and encouraged the members to join the working groups.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Meeting Agenda

TIME (JST)	PROGRAM	MODERATOR/SPEAKER(S)
11:00	Opening remarks	AAVS President
11:05	Summary of pre-meeting questionnaire responses	AAVS Office
11:15	Experience sharing by AAVS Members: short presentations on the current situation and coping mechanisms/recovery plans from "learning and teaching loss" in the new normal Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Prof. Nayana Wijayawardhane, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine & Animal Science, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka- Assoc. Prof. HAZILAWATI BINTI HAMZAH, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia- Prof. Jezie Acorda, Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of the Philippines, Los Baños, Philippines- Prof. Yoshihiro Sakoda, School of Veterinary Medicine, Hokkaido University, Japan
12:10	Semi-structured Plenary Discussion	All participants
12:45	AAVS updates	AAVS Secretary General
12:50	Group photo	AAVS Office
12:55-13:00	Closing remarks	AAVS Vice-President

Appendix 2: Summary of the Pre-meeting Questionnaire

The AAVS office gave out a pre-meeting questionnaire to the members with the following objectives: 1. to compare the teaching/learning setup of AAVS members in their current covid-19 situation from the previous year.; 2. To determine the impact of covid-19 in providing quality veterinary education in AAVS members two years after the emergence of covid-19.; 3. To better

understand the needs and expectations of AAVS members. A total of 25 institutions from 12 Asian countries responded.

The members were given the same question on the first objective as last year. Improvement was seen in today's learning and teaching setup. Most of them are now using the blended method to deliver didactic courses conducting practical training, and more institutions are now physically facilitating off-campus internships. The members were also asked to describe the current situation of their institution's learning/teaching setup. A member responded that practical and clinical rotation was moved early in the semester to avoid learning loss in case of another covid-19 wave. Another member also said that their current setup limits the development of skills and competencies of DVM students. While some institutions use video conferencing systems, such as the zoom application for Virtual classes, other schools will be allowed to conduct onsite teaching with strictly hygienic approaches. Only selected subjects (ex. internship, surgery, anatomy) will have partial face-to-face for laboratory. A hybrid teaching-learning system was also established. They built a hybrid implementation system for lectures and created a public space on campus so that students could watch lectures delivered on the Web.

The second section of the questionnaire focused on the impact of covid-19 on the Universities/Institutions in providing quality veterinary education. The members were asked if they had conducted a covid-19 vaccination program for staff and students. Only five respondents have not conducted. 4 of them have answered that it was readily available outside the institution and only one respondent answered that there are no available vaccines. They also assessed their institution's current teaching/learning setup, in which 18 of them answered that it was moderately effective because this allows the student to learn on their phase, with the modules and learning activities already available at their portals. However, since there is very limited interaction, some students find it challenging to cope, and laboratory classes are compromised because they cannot develop skills without physical handling or contact. Some respondents also said it was difficult to assess because they could not measure the students' learning skills in the current setup. It is ineffective because they cannot see their students' progress. In contrast, 3 of the respondents found it effective because of the zero covid policy in their country, which allowed the students to continue attending their lectures and hands-on practice physically. The respondents address the learning/teaching loss due to covid-19 restrictions by using online teaching and seminars, inviting guest lecturers, and conducting crash courses. At the same time, one respondent did not experience learning/teaching because they only faced three months restriction last year and turned teaching/learning online during that period. From the perspective of the faculty member on how the students are coping with the institution's adaptation from covid-19, 23 have answered that the students have adapted in using various technologies, 19 responded that they are supplementing instructional materials with open educational resources, nine have responded to that the students are participating in remote internship programs, and 17 answered that the students are facing challenges to gain hands-on skills. They also said that it is challenging to replace participatory clinical practice and other forms of training while some students have poor access to internet connectivity. Regarding if the institution has conducted any surveys to collect student feedback concerning the online teaching/learning interventions, 21 answered that they have conducted and

found out that while most of the students had IT devices ready for online learning, the stability, and availability of their internet connection was a significant concern. They also mentioned that students felt the loss in student-to-student and instructor-to-student relationships. Some students have difficulty learning some of the skills needed for some courses. We have also asked the AAVS members if any changes in the teaching/learning setup were introduced because of covid-19 that will likely remain post-covid. As seen on the slide, the result is that online teaching/learning, open educational resources, smaller class sizes, and remotely supervised internship will likely remain post-covid. One respondent said that remotely supervised internships might be beneficial, like visiting facilities in distant locations, and online visits to facilities in Asian countries may be interesting. We also asked the members what kind of information related to veterinary education in COVID-19 time would they like to hear from other AAVS Members- some of them were addressed by the presenters or picked up during the discussion.

Lastly, AAVS activities were focused on these objectives. We asked the members if they were able to access the teaching resource availability/needs platform that AAVS launched in May 2021 based on the request of members, while mostly answered that they have not tried accessing the said platform, four respondents answered yes, one of these also said that one professor at their college did an online lecture to students at another university. Those who were not able to access it said that they were unaware that AAVS launched a teaching resource platform. They tried but had a password issue, the materials they needed were not yet available, and they have not received any resources after the survey. If AAVS launches an online lecture series, we asked if the students would be interested in joining and most of the respondents answered yes depending on the topic. As for the members, we also asked them if they would be interested in delivering a topic, and the majority answered that they were interested. In connection with the previous question, we asked the members' preferred topics. Some of the topics are exotic and wildlife medicine, equine medicine and surgery, complementary and alternative medicine, diagnostic imaging, animal welfare, educational research methods.
