AHVMF Executive Director’s Report

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The P&L report for fiscal 2012-2013 shows that we raised a large amount of money, dispensed a large amount to 2 veterinary schools, funded some grants, and ended up with a large surplus.The P&L report for fiscal 2013-2014 shows that we raised less, dispensed much more, and ended up with a loss for the year.

There are several reasons for this pattern. First, Mercola initially agreed to a 2 for 1 matching without setting a limit for their contribution. Our fundraising efforts surprised them, so they ended up funding us for more (we are sure) than they originally intended. Last fiscal year they set a limit. This year the limit was even lower and has now been cut in half.

In the first year we secured a donor through Louisiana State University who donated $100,000, to be awarded to Louisiana State University as part of a matching fund. That donor subsequently donated a much larger sum directly to LSU (one that we could not hope to match) and has not communicated with us since then, despite continuing efforts by both the president and myself.

Mercola elected to make payments on their commitment of funds to us this year. We have just received $125,000, which is not reflected in last fiscal year’s P&L (nor in the current one, yet). We will hopefully receive 2 more payments of $62,500 each. The total is half of what we expected based on talks earlier in the year. Moral of the story: we need more corporate donors.

We are just starting to approach potential donors for the fall drive. Mercola was very interested in funding a drive specifically to fund resources for U TN to become the hub of CAVM nutrition research. This has changed to a drive for nutrition research, including nutrition as it relates to specific diseases. We have begun to contact natural dog food companies or divisions, using a broad definition of “natural.” (If that’s how they advertise it, that’s who we are contacting.) If this is unsuccessful, nutraceutical companies will also be approached. If this works well, it may be wise to identify similar types of drives so that companies in other categories can be targeted.

We have less donors this year but a larger average donation, so the trend for money from private donors is currently flat. Specific areas within the general drive, such as the small dose vaccine study and the University of Tennessee, garnered much larger average donations than did those that were “as needed” donations.

A survey was sent to most veterinary schools to invite them to compete for another $10,000 education grant, in order to identify at least 3 more veterinary schools that will work with CAVM in a way similar to U TN and LSU. Those who competed last time were asked to update their reports for us, in order to see who is doing the most.

A number of protocols and procedures have been created and updated. A letter was sent to all HOD delegates requesting that “dental scaling” not be looked upon as a procedure that can only be done properly under anesthesia. One potential dental study that will help settle the question is one that the Grant Committee has approved.

Pet owners and holistic veterinarians were contacted by me via email and invited to take surveys designed to elicit the items and modalities deemed most appropriate for treatment and for research. In addition members of the VBMA committee to establish phytotherapy as a AAVSB-recognized specialty were polled to ask what the most important Western herbs are to them. A list of the top 10 or so most commonly agreed upon herbs was compiled as a guide for herbal research. The same will be done for Chinese herbs.

Veterinarians were surveyed to find the items they carried most, their ranking of the importance of various modalities, what they used, and what they planned on getting training for. Pet owners were surveyed to find what they considered the most important for their pet, what their vet performed/dispensed, what they themselves administered, and which diseases they considered the most important for research. Part of the reason for 2 different surveys was to see whether there was a disconnect between what veterinarians are offering or trained in, and what pet owners believe is most important to use in their pets. Since by far the largest amount of money has been received from pet owners, not veterinarians, only pet owners were asked what was most important for research. Results are summarized on the Survey Results sheet.

Of natural items carried by veterinarians, nutraceuticals are carried by more veterinarians than any other item, followed by vitamins for general health, then Chinese herbs. Natural diets came after that point, reflecting the fact that it is difficult to compete with pet shops. Chinese herbs were the second-most performed or dispensed item after acupuncture, and also the second-most named item that veterinarians either were trained in or were planning on further training. (Acupuncture ranks first )

When asked to rate items from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important), pet owners echo veterinarians, ranking natural nutrition as the most important natural item for the health of their pet, with acupuncture second. Chinese herbs and nutraceuticals come after chiropractic, homeopathy and massage therapy. But for actual therapies performed by veterinarians on their pets, acupuncture rates first, followed by Chinese herbs. Of items the owners themselves dispense without veterinary help (but with possible help of others), natural nutrition was by far the most common. A second bunch included Bach Flower therapies, massage therapy, homeopathy, Western herbs, Reiki, and nutraceuticals. Some go elsewhere for chiropractic and Chinese herbs.

Diseases/problems ranked the most important for research were cancer, vaccine-related problems, nutrition and nutraceuticals, and arthritis. It is possible that respondents were influenced by the banner with the small breed vaccine study on the website.

My recommendations: cancer, vaccine problems (at least for now), nutrition, nutraceuticals and arthritis/joint pain (and probably myofascial disease, especially as it contributes to pain in arthritis) are the top areas that should be funded for research. For treatments, nutrition/nutraceuticals, Chinese herbs and Western herbs need the most research. For Chinese herbs, the best research to begin with is diseases that are relatively easily treated repeatedly with the same Chinese herbal formula, which do not require in-depth TCVM analysis. For non-Chinese herbs, the one most commonly used by the experts I surveyed is aloe vera. Other top herbs included thyme, turmeric, wild yam, milk thistle, hawthorne, garlic, echinacea, burdock, and cannabis. Honey was also included, but honey is currently already undergoing a fair amount of research for wound healing. The best use of AHVMF money is to fund commonly used modalities popular with potential donors, or common problems for which good CAVM answers exist, and which can easily be demonstrated with research acceptable to most conventional veterinarians.