

## Revisiting training needs in veterinary surgery in India

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Veterinary surgery in India is undergoing a period of rapid transformation, driven by advances in diagnostic imaging, minimally invasive procedures, anaesthetic management, biomaterials, and specialized companion animal care. Concurrently, changing socio-economic patterns, particularly in urban areas with rising pet ownership and increasing awareness of animal welfare, have significantly expanded the role of veterinary surgeons in clinical practice, emergency and critical care, rehabilitation, and preventive healthcare. In addition, veterinary surgeons play a vital role in safeguarding livestock health and productivity, thereby contributing to food security, rural livelihoods, and the national economy.

Veterinary education and clinical practice in India are also evolving to address these emerging demands through the adoption of modern technologies in animal healthcare and an increased emphasis on skill development. The number of veterinary colleges has increased steadily across both government and private sectors, improving access to veterinary education and training. However, this quantitative expansion has not always been accompanied by commensurate improvements in infrastructure, availability of adequately trained faculty and the clinical exposure. Consequently, a pronounced gap remains between theoretical knowledge and practical competence among graduates.

The Veterinary Council of India has prescribed minimum standards and revised the undergraduate curriculum to make veterinary education more comprehensive, encompassing companion animals, livestock, and wildlife. Despite these progressive reforms, opportunities for hands-on clinical and surgical training remain limited. Stringent regulations governing the use of animals for experimental purposes and practical training further constrain actual surgical exposure, leaving many graduates inadequately prepared to face real-world clinical challenges.

Moreover, within the discipline of veterinary surgery in India, formal specialization remains limited even at the postgraduate and PhD levels. Students are expected to develop competencies

across a wide spectrum, including soft tissue surgery, orthopaedics, diagnostic imaging, and anaesthesia, spanning diverse species such as companion animals, livestock, avian species, and wildlife. While this broad-based education ensures comprehensive exposure, it often limits the development of advanced expertise in any single domain, making it challenging even for postgraduates to attain true specialization.

The employment landscape in veterinary practice is undergoing a significant transformation. The rapid expansion of companion animal practice in metropolitan areas has markedly increased the demand for specialized veterinary surgical services. While opportunities in the public sector remain limited, there is a steady rise in demand for private veterinary services, particularly in small animal practice. Consequently, many young veterinarians enter private practice soon after graduation, where they are expected to independently manage a wide spectrum of medical and surgical cases across species.

At the same time, corporate superspeciality veterinary hospitals are emerging in major urban centres across the country, generating a growing need for practitioners with domain-specific expertise in areas such as orthopaedics, anaesthesia, ophthalmic surgery, and diagnostic imaging. This evolving scenario highlights the need for veterinarians to possess not only strong theoretical knowledge but also advanced technical skills, sound clinical judgment, and professional confidence-competencies that can only be effectively developed through structured, hands-on training.

In the absence of adequate training platforms, many practitioners rely on experiential learning during routine clinical work. While valuable, this approach is often unstructured and may not align with standard protocols or best practices. Increasing competition in private practice further necessitates continuous upskilling and the adoption of advanced diagnostic and surgical techniques.

Pursuit of advanced training abroad has become an emerging trend among practitioners from urban centres; however, such opportunities

remain inaccessible to most due to financial and logistical constraints. At the same time, training opportunities in large animal surgery remain limited, compounded by declining interest in the field and similar economic barriers. This situation highlights the urgent need to establish advanced, affordable, and accessible training centres within the country for both small and large animal surgical practice. Veterinary institutions and colleges must therefore prioritize the development of need-based, skill-oriented programmes tailored specifically to practicing veterinarians.

The Indian Society for Veterinary Surgery has played a commendable role in promoting hands-

on training through workshops and continuing education programmes. However, there remains considerable scope to further expand the reach, frequency, and specialization of such initiatives, particularly for young graduates and field practitioners.

In conclusion, there is a pressing need to design and implement structured, competency-based training programmes in veterinary surgery and allied disciplines. Greater emphasis on hands-on learning, accessibility, and standardization will be crucial in bridging the gap between knowledge and practice, enhancing professional competence, and ultimately improving the quality of animal healthcare services in India.

**EDITORS** 