

Animal clinic — human hospital

By DAVID WHITE

"Hi my name is Duke. I like to eat anything — apples, oranges. I'm good with children. I'm nine years old and I'm spoiled." Tom Aringdale, a client of Texas A&M's Small Animal Clinic, is speaking for his small dog, a Chinese pug.

"You can hardly call them dogs," says Aringdale. "You get so attached to them, isn't that right Duke? Stay away from him — he has those big brown boots and he doesn't want you stepping all over them. Sit down and rest your bones, boy."

Duke is just one of the "special" animals treated by Texas A&M's Small Animal Clinic; there were 1,920 in 1977. The clinic is a popular place for pet owners to bring their animals because of its veterinary specialists and its special facilities.

The small animal clinic has a capacity for 225 in-patients and six major surgeries simultaneously. It is set up much like a human hospital. The intensive care unit, instead of beds, has 12 cages, some with intravenous feeders leading into the cage occupants of the cages.

There is a surgical preparation room where the animals are shaved and anesthetized, just as humans are, and the surgical rooms are all equipped with equivalent facilities and equipment as are found in a human hospital.

Dr. W.F. Juliff's students are in the surgical preparation room shaving the right front leg of a female black cat. On the table Wiggles, a sandy-colored female terrier, is having her chest and abdomen shaved. Both animals have been anesthetized.

The cat had been shot with a shotgun and David Nelson, a veterinary student, is going to set the cat's leg which had been shattered by the buckshot. Wiggles is going to be spayed and have a small breast tumor removed by Jerry Wendel, another veterinary student.

Both animals are rubbed down with two different yellow-brown iodine solutions in the area to be operated on. This along with the shaving makes sure the area is sterile.

Once the animals are under the influence of the anesthesia their tongues are exposed so that the anesthesiologist can determine by the color of the tongue if the animal is getting sufficient oxygen and breathing properly. He can also check the animal's pulse using the lingual artery in the tongue.

The animals once they are ready are wheeled down the hall on a cart to surgery. In surgery Nelson puts on a cap and mask and carefully scrubs his hands. After washing he is helped into the green surgeon's gown so that his sterile hands do not touch anything. Nelson then puts on a pair of plastic gloves which cling tightly to his hands. All of this is done to keep the conditions of the operation as sterile as possible.

Nelson lays a "drape" — a green cloth with a hole in it — over the cat and situates the hole of the cloth over the area to be operated on; further measures to keep the surgery sterile.

Nelson makes an incision down the cat's leg. He removes a ball of black hair from the wound — forced into the cat's leg by the penetration of the shot. Nelson cuts away the

layers of muscle tissue until a jagged bone is revealed. "Boy it's ragged in there," Nelson says when he sees the bone.

He removes three small fragments of a shot pellet. For a minute the students argue over whether the cat was shot with a .22 rifle or a shotgun. "We'll send it down to ballistics for a test," Nelson jokingly says.

The bone has been shattered by the pellet and Nelson removes some tiny bone fragments. He takes a device that looks like a hand drill and inserts a surgical pin into it. Nelson slowly inserts the pin up the bone marrow. "How's kitty doing?" Nelson asks the student anesthesiologist, David Rundell. "Good," is Rundell's reply as he checks the cat's tongue.

Nelson wires the bone fragments back to the bone with a thin steel wire. "You twist the wire until a quarter of a turn before it breaks," Nelson says. How do you know when a quarter of turn before it breaks is? "That's why you go to vet school," he answers.

One of the wires breaks. "That was a quarter turn too much," Nelson explains. He removes the broken wire and starts again.

At the next table Jerry Wendel, who has spayed Wiggles and removed a small cyst on her chest, drops a pair of clamps on the floor. "Take it easy, Jerry," Nelson jokingly says.

Nelson is finished and starts to close the cat's leg. The "needle" is curved and looks like a fish-hook. The "thread" is thin steel. The reason for this non-irritating steel is to discourage the animal from chewing

on the stitching and to hold the incision closed.

Once the suturing is done the cat is wheeled on a cart down to radiology. X-rays are taken to make sure the leg has been set properly and all the bone fragments are removed. The X-rays show that the leg has been set well and the pin is in position. "You only get a B+ because of the poor suturing job," anesthesiologist Rundell teases.

As the cat is wheeled back down the hall to its cage other students ask Nelson, "How did it go?" "Fantastic," Nelson answers as he hurries the cat back down the corridor.

By the time the cat is in the recovery room it is waking up. It

shakes with cold caused by its metabolism being slowed by the anesthesia. The cat meows as it starts to feel again and looks around in a daze.

"She is not quite with us," says Nelson as he puts her in her cage. "I'll check back with her later to make sure everything is okay."

The small animal clinic performed 2,414 surgeries last year using many of the same techniques and equipment used in hospitals for humans. This special treatment pleases clients of the clinic like Aringdale who says, "Animals get to be like people. They are pretty special." Or as one bio-medical science student said, "They are people."

A&M first in med/dent

Texas A&M University is a leading supplier of the state's medical and dentistry students.

Since 1953, more than 65 percent of Texas A&M students applying to Texas dental schools have been selected and more than 60 percent of those applying to the state's medical schools have been admitted, said pre-med and pre-dentistry adviser Dr. Gil Schroeter.

The acceptance rate and total of 1,087 students are among the best in the state, he notes.

"I think it reflects well on the quality of our students," said Schroeter.

Applications originating from

Texas A&M have increased in both professions since 1972, but now appear to be leveling off. Both developments reflect national trends.

Last year, Texas A&M sent its first applicant ever to the Harvard School of Medicine. Another landmark in pre-med and pre-dentistry history was 1956, when 27 of 33 medical school applicants were accepted and all seven dental school hopefuls were admitted.

Presently, about 1,000 students are studying pre-med courses and 300-400 are pursuing pre-dentistry curricula, notes Schroeter.

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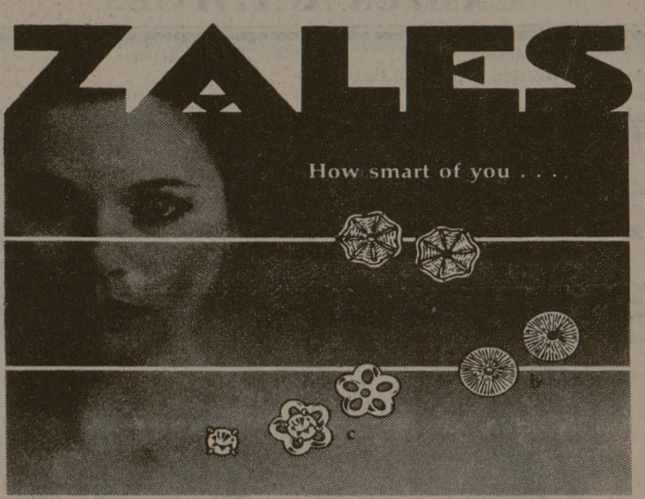


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Any freshman in any field of study that is interested in the above areas is urged to apply. Talented people are needed in all areas, so don't be afraid to drop this application by Room 216, Student Programs Office, MSC. Applications close Tuesday, March 28, 1978, at 5:00 p.m.

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