

Teaching, learning and examination in veterinary anatomy: what do students tell us?

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Introduction

Anatomy is a fundamental curricular unit in medical courses. With the changes in society, the presence of students in an increasingly digital world, and the controversy associated with the use of corps for educational or experimental purposes, for ethical reasons and issues related to animal welfare, much has been done to circumvent and improve this practice.

Our teaching team has been focused on developing pedagogical and examination practices that stimulate students and meet the programme objectives. With this work, we intended to evaluate the perception of the students of the Anatomy I curricular unit in relation to the new examination methods implemented.

Methods

The students belong to the Integrated Master degree in Veterinary Medicine, at University of Évora, Portugal. Using the Google Forms platform, a questionnaire was drawn up with 16 questions and sent out via the Moodle platform: 1) What is your gender?; 2) What is your age?; 3) Is this the first time you have enrolled and attended this course?; 4) Did looking at dissected corps (in atlases, applications, on the internet) help you understand myology?; 5) Did looking at images in atlases, software or on the internet make it easier to identify the muscles in the corps? ; 6) Would you consider studying myology using only software/models?; 7) Which resource do you consider most important when studying myology?; 8) Do you find it difficult to learn anatomy using only models?; 9) Are dissection classes useful for acquiring skills for other curricular units and for your professional future?; 10) Of the examination methods applied, which is your favourite?; 11) Which of the examinations do you think best prepares you for your professional future?; 12) What are the advantages of oral exam?; 13) What is the main difficulty inherent in oral exam?; 14) What are the advantages of written exam (without visualising any anatomical model or corps)?; 15) What is the main difficulty inherent in written exam (without visualising any anatomical model or corps)?; 16) What are the advantages of mixed exam (with visualisation of an anatomical model or corps)? The students answered the questionnaire anonymously.

Results and discussion

Of the 67 students who attended Anatomy I classes, 58 (86.6%) answered the questionnaire, the majority of whom were female (n=45, 77.6%). Most of the students who

answered the questionnaire were 19 years old (n=24; 41.4%). Almost all the students (n=57; 98.3%) were attending the course for the first time. All the students (100%) considered that observing corps helped them understand dog myology. Fifty-six students (96.6%) said that looking at images in atlases, software or on the internet made it easier to identify the muscles in the corps. Fifty-seven students (96.6%) would not consider studying myology using software/models alone. The corps was considered the most important resource in the study of myology by 57 students (98.3%). One student (1.7%) considered the atlas to be the most significant resource. Surprisingly, 48 students (82.8%) found it difficult to learn anatomy using only models. All the students considered the dissection classes to be useful in acquiring skills for other curricular units and for their professional future. Mixed exam (n=33, 56.9%), followed by oral exam (n=23, 39.7%), were considered the examination methods favoured by the students. However, in terms of preparing for their professional future, 37 students (63.8%) chose oral exam as their preferred method, followed by mixed exam (n=20, 34.5%). When asked about the advantages and difficulties of the various examination methods (oral, written, and mixed), this is where students' opinions differ the most. The anxiety level parameter was identified as one of the main difficulties inherent to oral exams by 21 students (36.2%). On the other hand, this parameter was no longer relevant in mixed exams for 47 students (81.0%).

Conclusions

Despite all the alternative methods available for teaching and learning Veterinary Anatomy, students consider the corps to be essential in medical education. Regarding examination methods, students prefer mixed exam, but consider that oral exam is the method that prepares them best.

Keywords: education; exam; undergraduates; veterinary master degree