

A skills laboratory for both veterinary and veterinary nursing students – trends and triumphs in the first year after opening

Increased student intake necessitated alternatives for clinical skills teaching at the Faculty of Veterinary Science, Pretoria. The Onderstepoort Skills Laboratory was therefore opened in April 2015.

This study analysed the utilisation in the first year by reviewing student visits to an open access (10 stations, 55 skills) and supervised practical (10 models, 27 skills) area. The open access area had 1060 visits. Highest visitation was by 5th year veterinary students (38%), 1st year veterinary nursing students (21%) and 2nd year veterinary nursing students (18%). The most utilised stations were Suturing (27%), Clinical Pathology (24%) and IV access (14%). All stations were visited by both student groups. Visitation was highest prior to practical examinations and entering clinics: 57% of visits in both student groups; implying 43% visits without an incentive.

The practical area accommodated 1719 students in 50 practicals on 12 topics and 9 models, involving all veterinary students in the second, third and fourth years and all veterinary nursing students. Breed'nBetsy's® and the dystocia cow model were used in >50% of the practicals. IKEA dogs, heart-and-lung sounds, thoracocentesis and IV access models were also used. Practical with much smaller student numbers included ophthalmological examination, ultrasound-guided cystocentesis and colic examination.

All areas of the skills laboratory were well utilised by teaching staff and both student groups. Teaching successes included the very high utilisation of the Breed'nBetsy's® and the percentage of open access visits on own initiative. A well-executed open access area has proven to be valuable teaching tool that promotes student centred learning.

