

A reflection on my progression toward entrustment of EPA4

I have recently attended two lectures and one practical class on fluid therapy, contributing to my progression toward entrustment for EPA4: **Recognise a patient requiring urgent or emergent care and initiate evaluation and management.** This is a reflection on an experience I had on placement, along with how I feel the recent lectures and practical have prepared me better for day one skills.

During my first clinical placement I was asked to set up fluids, to be ready for the next patient in need. I was happy to help and give it a go, but I was instantly embarrassed that I had no idea what I was doing. I felt silly and useless as a DVM3 student being unfamiliar with the components and the theory of fluid therapy. A nurse happily showed me how to set up a machine. I paid close attention to each step and made a mental note that this is a skill I looked forward to learning back at uni.

One day on placement at the same clinic, a panicked owner called about their dog having “heat stroke”. They were instructed to bring the dog straight in. Immediately and flawlessly, the team got to work, each nurse doing their part to prep a table with fluids, an emergency kit and all necessary equipment for almost any possible scenario for the incoming patient. I again, felt useless, but was interested to see how the whole team worked together, and how each person seemed to already know exactly what to do. I look forward to that feeling in practice – having enough routine and knowledge to know what is most likely needed to be done in certain cases.

The patient arrived, and everyone was ready. He happily trotted into the treatment room, his only visible abnormality being a bit of a puffy face. I was confused, as this is not how I expected this patient to present, but I was happy that the professionals in the room felt the same way. This guy did not have any indication of heat stroke. After the vet spoke to the owner while the nurses and I had a good look at him, it was agreed upon that he must have been stung by an insect and had an allergic reaction. His treatment turned out to be much less stressful and less complex than originally anticipated.

This was a lesson in a few ways. 1) Owners do not always recognise urgent or emergent care properly and while it is important to be prepared for any scenario, it is crucial that the vet objectively evaluates the situation and sees the patient in person. 2) Vet nurses are invaluable, and it is very important to have a team that is on the same page, especially in potentially critical situations. 3) I need to learn fluid therapy and get comfortable with knowing when and how to use it.

Returning to uni, I was comforted by the fact that the fluid lectures made a lot of sense to me. I felt relieved to understand the theory. The prac drove home some of the practical knowledge and it felt useful to set up the machine and work through equations. I plan to ask all future placements if I can set up fluids for them and further work on my evaluation and management of critical patients. I feel closer to entrustment for EPA4 after having these classes, but look forward to using this new knowledge on my next placements to continue progressing.