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**Critical Thinking Skills and Disposition among Veterinary Students at Texas A&M**

“We understand critical thinking to be purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is.” (Facione, 2010)

**AIMS**

Veterinarians need critical thinking skills; veterinary education must, therefore, incorporate the assessment of or training in critical thinking. In particular, veterinarians require critical thinking in the practice of evidence-based veterinary medicine and the accurate and appropriate diagnosis and treatment of veterinary patients.

**Methods**

Two test instruments were used to assess critical thinking skills and disposition among veterinary students 3 times during their veterinary training, at the beginning, after the 2nd year, and after the 3rd year. The instruments were the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) and the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI).

Mean total scores for CCTST were 21.6, 21.2, and 22.9, at pre-, 2nd year, and 3rd year, respectively. These averages can be categorized as “strong” (categories are weak, moderate, strong and superior). CCTDI mean total scores were 318, 311, and 310, at pre-, 2nd year, and 3rd year, respectively. These averages can be categorized as “positive” (categories are low, ambivalent, positive, and high).

**CONCLUSIONS and NEXT STEPS**

These results should be shared with veterinary instructors at Texas A&M to consider if the measured critical thinking skills and disposition are adequate to meet the needs of future veterinary professionals. If not, we need to ask whether we should be looking at our instruction methods and course learning objectives to determine if and when we could incorporate critical thinking skills development in all years of the curriculum. We did not test students at the end of the veterinary curriculum and do not currently have plans to do so. Perhaps critical thinking skills increase again after the 4th year, during which students complete clinical rotations synthesizing and applying information learned during the first 3 years.

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