



My Acrivet-ISVO scholarship experience was an amazing month spent at the Animal Medical Center (AMC) in New York City, with Dr Alexandra van der Woerd. I work in general practice in Singapore with a small but steady amount of ophthalmology cases seen every month. What I really desired was to be immersed in ophthalmology cases day to day and that was why I had applied for the scholarship. The AMC caseload, predominantly canines and felines with some rabbits coming through the exotics service, was perfectly relevant to my clientele back home.

Each week was organised such that Mondays were allocated for surgeries, and the rest of the days allocated for consultations. Surgery days are the most fun for me, so I did not mind that we would finish those days late in the night! With a steady caseload, I was able to be a part of numerous surgeries, like lip-to-lids, cataracts, grafts, etc, where Dr Van der Woerd would talk me through her decision making process. We also performed procedures like electroretinograms and pupillometry.

On a quiet day, I even had the fortune to practice techniques on cadavers. Since a big part of being a good surgeon is observation and practice, I would say, at the risk of sounding morbid...cadaver training is awesome!



*ISVO scholarship recipient Dr Cheryl Tay (middle) with Dr Alexandra van der Woerd (left) and Sofia Romero (LVT) at the Animal Medical Center in New York City*

On consultation days, I would start each consultation on my own, taking the history and completing the ophthalmology exam. Thereafter, head out the consultation room to discuss my findings, differentials and plan. I found this extremely valuable as I was challenged to organize my thoughts quickly and was able to compare my conclusions with Dr Van der Woerd's. Being able to look at eye after eye...I became better at picking up smaller details in both my slit-lamp and fundic exams over the weeks. Differentiating fine corneal epithelial defects from an irregular cornea with an intact epithelium without fluorescein staining actually became quite easy!

Between consultations, we ran through various publications, allowing for open discussion on current published topics, and being trained to review publications appropriately.

At the end of everyday, we ran through all the cases that were seen, going through each case work-up, differential diagnoses, and treatment plan. This usually concludes the day unless an emergency comes in requiring surgery. These cases usually involved a luxated lens or a perforated globe...a "perf" as they are fondly referred to.

As I packed my bags (with a tear in my eye!), I realised how much I've learnt...really getting comfortable with visions tests, managing glaucoma, lens luxations, and perforated globes, diagnosing various retinal diseases, and grading all sorts of cataracts. I've seen so many different corneal ulcers at different stages of healing, their respective treatment and treatment outcome. I thought patching a deep corneal ulcer or a "perf" was the only way, but it is amazing how the cornea can heal without help (even if it looks really bad to start with)!

Coming from a country without any residing veterinary ophthalmologists, it would be difficult to get a similar experience at home. Thus, I would love to thank Acrivet, ISVO, Dr van der Woerd and her team, and everyone who had a part to play in this opportunity of mine.

The practice of ophthalmology that I had experience in those weeks reaffirms my love for ophthalmology. It involved surgery, medicine, neurology, oncology, histopathology, endocrinology, imaging.. a lovely mish-mash of different disciplines all rolled into one beautiful structure...the eye.

Cheryl Tay