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Barry Stupine: Meeting the Challenge

If you are looking for Barry Stupine, the young, tousle-haired director of the Small Animal Hospital, and associate dean for Administration, you may have to search the hospital and laboratories. Stupine, who came to the Small Animal Hospital three years ago, is not an administrator who spends his days at a desk. Instead, he's everywhere in the hospital, darting in and out of doorways, with a friendly smile and a wave to everyone. He takes time to listen and to talk to all, and his words are accompanied by many gestures.

Barry likes challenges on the job, on the raquetball court, and in his favorite pastime, mathematical games. He assumed the directorship of the Small Animal Hospital in 1978, because it would be stimulating; and so it is. Stupine became the first non-veterinarian to administer a small animal hospital affiliated with a veterinary school and a trend began.

Today, about five other schools have hired administrators, and they meet annually to exchange views and experiences.

The hospital environment is not new to Stupine. While studying for an MBA in health administration at George Washington University, he spent one year at HUP as administrative resident. After receiving his master's degree, Stupine stayed at HUP for one year as evening administrator and as assistant administrator of the hospital. The next six years were spent as associate administrator at the Hospital of the Medical College of Pennsylvania, and it was from there that Barry came to the Small Animal Hospital. In addition to his master's degree, Stupine holds an undergraduate degree in economics from Temple University.

Since beginning his tasks at the Veterinary School, Stupine has made many changes directed toward making the Small Animal Hospital the best. He streamlined procedures, and organized the hospital to parallel those of the university. The hospital now serves about 17,000 cases annually, has been expanded diagnostic and treatment facilities, and organized the hospital to parallel those of the University. The hospital is mandated to break even, and it has for the last three years, without a rise in tuition," Stupine said. "We even have been able to pay back some of our debt to the University. The hospital itself does lose some money; last year we spent $1.7 million and took in $1.5 million, the smallest loss in recent history. In a teaching situation, some procedures just cannot be charged in full to the client," Bills, however, are now itemized by units of actual services to determine where revenue is generated and an incentive system for clinicians and staff has been instituted to encourage the complete recording of treatments and charges.

Shortly after his arrival, Stupine discovered a shortage of staff and technicians. "This is a teaching hospital and to provide proper service, one must have proper staff," he said. Currently interna number ten and there are fourteen residents, in addition to about thirty-five faculty members from the Department of Clinical Studies. The number of veterinary nurses has been increased to eight in the wards, and a registered nurse is in charge of the operating rooms. The intensive care unit is currently staffed around the clock with trained nurses. Also, the clinician on duty in most of the sections of the Department of Clinical Studies can now be reached for emergency consultation through a beeper.

The hospital now serves about 17,000 cases each year and the emergency service, which handles 5,000 cases annually, has been upgraded by adding staff during evening and weekend hours. Also, to meet the need, a Parvovirus isolation ward has been added. The clinical laboratory is now open evenings and weekends. The referral service has been improved and a system has been instituted to keep the practitioner informed. "When a case has been seen at the hospital," Stupine said, "we send a post card to the referring veterinarian, giving him the date and the name of the clinician in charge. We then furnish clinicians with a form to complete for treatment and diagnosis and request that they return it to the appointment secretaries. Then the forms are mailed to the practitioner. We have also installed a special telephone line to get the referring veterinarian through to the appointment secretary; thirty percent of our cases are referred." Stupine believes that although we have taken some steps to improve our referral procedures, still more needs to be done.

The medical records retrieval system has been improved by hiring a medical records librarian. "We now have ninety-eight percent of the records on hand at the proper time," Barry advises. "This has improved morale. Clinicians no longer need to horde records for fear of never being able to find them."

The white coats with the clinician's name on them are further evidence of Stupine's professional philosophy as are the uniforms of each student who works at the hospital.

Despite his many tasks, Barry still finds time to lecture to students and conduct seminars for students and practitioners on the business aspects of veterinary practice. He also helps other veterinary schools with administrative problems and serves as a consultant to the federal government in the area of distress grants for medical and veterinary schools.

When Stupine arrives at home, the Small Animal Hospital becomes secondary to playing with his two children, tossing a ball for his golden retriever, or settling down with a mathematical puzzle. He relaxes by playing the piano and works off his nervous energy lifting weights or playing raquetball.

The new hospital will bring additional concerns to its administrator because of higher utility costs and greater space to maintain. But this doesn't worry Barry Stupine because he knows that the new building, with its expanded diagnostic and treatment facilities, will make the Veterinary Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania "the best veterinary hospital in the world."

Dr. William Boucher: The Teacher

"Big Bill," as he is affectionately known to several thousand graduates and to many of his faculty colleagues, has participated in many great changes at the School of Veterinary Medicine and, yet, has remained virtually unchanged himself. This immediately tells us a great deal about the character of Dr. William Boucher.