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Unusual Career

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Dr. Jessica Dimuzio applies differential diagnosis every day, not when dealing with animal patients but when counseling fellow veterinarians. Dr. Dimuzio is a career and personnel management consultant who specializes in veterinary medicine. Her client base is national and many consultations are done by phone.

She has first-hand experience with the diversity of the profession. Circumstances forced her to change career paths several times since graduating from Penn in 1978. "I started in a small animal practice with an emphasis on exotics," she said. "A back injury put an end to that and I became director of the veterinary technician program at Harcum Junior College. Then my husband and I had the opportunity to return to Kenya to work in wildlife conservation. After our return from Africa, I worked in sales and marketing for a major pet food company for a few years, calling on veterinarians."

While calling on practitioners, Dr. Dimuzio became aware that some were dissatisfied with private practice. "Each year about 1,500 veterinarians explore changing positions or leaving the field. Some drop out because they are burned out, some are discouraged, and some just want to do something different. Many do not know which career direction to take or what position will allow a good match between their skills and personality and

the job tasks. They often are not aware of the opportunities available in private practice, industry, government, or academic institutions. And traditional career counseling services have little familiarity with the veterinary profession and can offer only limited guidance in this unique medical field.

"I had long been interested in counseling and became certified in the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, a psychometrics instrument that is used to determine a person's preferences for acquiring information, making decisions, and responding to structure." The instrument, actually a lengthy questionnaire, is just one of the tools that lets Dr. DiMuzio discover her client's natural interests, skills, and special talents. She then utilizes her veterinary training and her diverse experience in the field to point out a new and better career path for the client.

Sometimes this may involve a closer look at practice - either learning personnel management of perhaps a reorganization of responsibilities. In other cases, it may lead the client to change specialties within the field. "Many veterinarians prefer introversion, living in a world of ideas, and are not all that happy dealing with other people," Dr. Dimuzio said. "This can result in dissatisfaction with work. By knowing the field and knowing the client's skills and interests, I can realistically appraise the current

career situation and offer recommendations. This may mean teaching communication and team building techniques, either individually or for the practice. In other situations, it may be to help the client establish attainable long term career goals, including how to market his/her skills and talents."

Dr. Dimuzio has not confined her work to individual practitioners. She is lecturing extensively before professional associations and has organized student and faculty workshops at veterinary schools here and in Canada on career options, integration of teaching and learning styles, problem based learning, and communication and team building.

Her current project is the development of manual on how to select a veterinary specialty. "I want to provide specific information so an individual can match skills and interests with a specialty," she said. "Right now a person may just guess whether a particular specialty is right for him/her, only to find out two years down the road that it really is not what he/she expected."

Dr. Dimuzio has put her veterinary training to good use, though not in the traditional manner. She is a prime example of the diverse career paths veterinary training prepares for.

Veterinary Dental News

Dr. Colin Harvey, professor of surgery and dentistry, is developing a Penn-based Canine-Feline Periodontal Fund as an umbrella organization for research, continuing education and product evaluation in the general area of companion animal periodontal disease. These activities are coordinated with the Center for Veterinary Medicine of the US-FDA, and with input from a broad-based consultant panel. One possible direction for activities is the establishment of a review and recognition system for products

designed to prevent or treat periodontal disease.

The intensive hands-on veterinary dental continuing education programs presented by Dr. Peter Emily and Dr. Harvey at the Penn Dental School have been continued for 1993-94; Periodontics and Oral Surgery on December 3-5, 1993; Endodontics and Conservative Restorations on February 4-6, 1994; and Feline Dentistry on March 25-27, 1994. Details available from the Office of Continuing Education, 215-898-3525.

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