

EBVS Podcast Transcript: The Animal Specialists Episode #3 “The Road to Recognition” with Antonio Cruz

Host Julie Rosser

Well, then I will just start off by thanking you, Antonio, for having some time to talk on our podcast. And just welcome and thanks for being here.

Guest Antonio Cruz

My pleasure. Thank you for having me.

Host Julie Rosser

I have what might be an annoying habit of asking our guests to introduce themselves because I know you can do it better than me and because people are here to hear your words. Could I invite you to tell us your name and specialties in this situation and where you currently work?

Guest Antonio Cruz

My name is Antonia Cruz. I'm originally from Spain.

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I am a board-certified surgeon by the American and European Colleges of Veterinary Surgeries. And I'm also a diplomat of the American College of Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation. So technically, I have two different specialties. Currently, I work as a freelance surgeon throughout Spain and Europe. And I also have a position at the University of Giessen in Germany where I spend part of my time, a big chunk of my time, but I actually live in Spain.

Host Julie Rosser

That sounds exciting. So, okay, for the full disclosure to our listeners, I've known Antonio, of course, for a while as a fellow equine surgeon. And also in recent years, in a capacity that's newer for me, as Antonio is our national representative for EBVS to Spain. So maybe you could tell us, I know I'm curious to hear, why did you volunteer for this position? What's exciting about it?

Guest Antonio Cruz

Well, you know, the position they offered to step in came through the European College of Veterinary Surgeons to the chair of the board in Greece because the position was coming up.

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And he was, of course, the liaison as well of the college with EBVS. And then he asks if I would be interested in serving. And I thought it would be very exciting because I've always been very interested. And actually, one of my goals in terms of Europe as well and to Spain was to promote the advancement of the care medicine and to advance as well into the structure of veteran medicine in Spain that it was fairly inexistent at the time. So I think that I was a big platform to become involved and to return to the community as well. Some of my experiences and some of my learnings to my sort of worldwide appointments in the last 30 years of my professional.

Host Julie Rosser

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Well, thank you. So I'm going to go on a little bit of a tangent here just because I think it's a cool question. And again, I'm curious to hear your answer to this. But going back to those early days, what motivated you to become an EBVS specialist? What was the incentive there?

Guest Antonio Cruz

Of course, I'm a graduate of a Spanish Veterinary School, but I was the first, no, the second generation of Erasmus students, so we were still a little bit of guinea pigs with the program. And I had the opportunity to get a scholarship to go to finish my degree into Glasgow Veterinary School in Scotland. And, you know, I come from a family of veterinarians. I was fortunate that my older brother was very interested in anesthesia. He was the first Spanish diplomate in anesthesia. And he was paramount of the transformation of anesthesia in Spain. So anyways, at the time, also my father was wishing for me to go with a medication and pursue, you know, the best I could be. And I went to Glasgow and I knew then that the opportunities started to be.

in North America. But, you know, I knew that I wanted to be the best I could be, and I knew I had to train in the best places as well. So that's why I went to North America. At the time, as I said, a specialization of old metal structure in Europe was starting to be structured. The colleges started around the early 90s, and at that time, I was way on my way into my residency.

Soon after, pretty much at the same time that I then came boarded by the American College, I did become boarded by the European College, of course, living, you know, 10,000 miles away. I've always been very close to home, to Spain, and to Europe, and I've been witnessing

the progression and the development of veterinary medicine in Europe, and it's been exciting to follow that.

Of course, in the early days with Joerg Auer and the early days at the college. So I witnessed all of that and I've always been very keen on the European College. And of course, when I returned to Europe, it was only natural that it would become involved. In certain ways, I've been involved as the chair and the program committee and so on. And of course, as a plate, as the national representative for the EDS, for all the diplomats in Spain.

So that's been a little bit my trajectory and some specifically I'm passionate about what I do.

Host Julie Rosser

It's a really interesting story. I'd love to hear about your journey. I think before we diverge into the journey of recognition in Spain, which is sort of the brainchild of this podcast episode, I just want to quickly...highlight a little bit about that and sort of set up that story, if we can do that. I think a lot of our followers have seen the news announcements, which were last fall, about your success in achieving specialist recognition in Spain.

Guest Antonio Cruz

Well, if I may just start from a little bit earlier on and explain to people why a specialization, where does it come from? Why a body of professionals decide to specialize on what that means to the public? So in a nutshell, I mean, people specialize this because they start to break their boundaries and they start to seek more knowledge and delve into the depths of a specific discipline. And when that happens, the body of these people that they're interested, they want to join efforts to put things into common, to collaborate, to advance, to progress. And this progress, in reality, the largest beneficiary of this progress is the public, is society. And then what happens is we've gone from a sort of James Herriot type of model of veteran medicine, which was very good and very romantic and it's great. And I see my dad in that sort of, in those shoes. 07:44

You know, we advance a lot, and I think in the last probably 100, 150 years, veterinary medicine has been exposed to a tremendous growth. Of course, there have been leaders of this growth, and the leaders, actually, they've been the specialists on each different field. So the public benefits from all of this, yeah, because now there is access to more knowledge, more technology, and people that before,

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You could take your pet or your horse or your elephant to someone that it could tell you, well, I'm not really sure what's going on. Today, you know, you can say, well, we can do a CT, we can do an MRI, we can do an endoscopy. I'm going to tell you, we learned through publications and through scientific advantage a lot about different diseases and how to

handle them. It's exactly the same that has happened in human medicine since the early days, cutting legs. And, you know, thank God this has been the case, right?

So why do you need this specialization? Well, first and foremost, to propose. And why do you need to recognize it and society at large to recognize that these people exist? Well, it's for their own protection. And in a way, it's the creation of the colleges. There is one part that is scientific, of course. There is another part that is a quality stamp. And it's a quality stamp that is telling the public that. This person...it matches and it comes to a minimum level that is going to guarantee that you are in good hands. Otherwise, if you don't educate the public and you don't set this up, you are cutting the right of the public to choose. And the right of the public to choose is one of the fundamental principles of a free market. But in order for them to choose, they need to be educated.

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And in order to be educated, we need to tell them what it means to be board certified. Because there's many others, many other trainings and many other denominations. But how does, you know, an architect know where to take his dog or his cat or his horse or her horse? How does he know if I will be completely unrelated to the term medicine and I would have an animal that has a strange problem that my family veterinarian can't really attend or is reached the end of the road. As a consumer, how do I know where to go? Because I can see written, oh, this person is this and that. And paper, you know, is able to stand everything. And social network is able to stand everything. But in reality, you should look for a quality stamp that guarantees that this person has gone through a rigorous training program that is being audited, that requires an ongoing education, and that it has the weight of a professional college behind him or her. In other words, if you would have your kid that needs shoulder surgery, you would take it to someone that is telling you that is a shoulder surgeon, or you would search someone that is a fellow of the Royal College of surgeons, of orthopedic surgeons, and is credited with that.

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I think it's bidimensional. In a nutshell, it's the advancement of science, and another one is the protection of public. And this is why it's important, the existence of ecology. Yeah, I think it's so important to really clearly communicate this, that an EBVS specialist title is a European-level standard, and it's professionally organized, accredited, maintained.

And, you know, the ultimate goal of this is continuously to improve animal health and human health in responsible and sustainable ways. Yeah, I mean, people should know that, you know, our training programs are three years plus all the internships, plus the studying, etc. And that never ends, I mean, in reality. And that's very different to someone that he can go and do a course that it could be a year long, you know, so it's like, okay, let's make things clear.

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What a diplomat is and what does it mean? How many hours of training these people has? How is the training occurring? Who is controlling that program? How does someone get accepted to that program? What is required to maintain those accreditations? Because I think the public deserves that.

Host Julie Rosser

I definitely agree. And I think one of the challenges that we face in communicating this is I think some people have the perspective that EBVS specialists are really only relevant in academic institutions or in science and universities. But, you know, a lot of us are also in clinical practice. And I think we can communicate that it's very relevant in practice as well. So maybe this is a stepping stone back towards the story of Spain. How do you feel about dispelling the idea that we're only relevant at a high level of science and academia?

Guest Antonio Cruz

Well, I mean, I think we are relevant at any level that the public meets us, that would be at many different levels. What is happening is that, you know, this is a change in the structure and the organization of the profession. And of course, there have been people that...they've been self-taught or taught through different courses and this and that. And I couldn't argue, you know, I mean, I think some of those people can be very good and are very good. But how does someone know? And for this, this is where the body, any kind of collegial organization will be based on that. Because otherwise I could be a self-taught architect. Right. And the same argument that some people can utilize saying that you know, they are not specialists, but they can work as some specialists. It's like, so, well, the same argument would be with someone say, well, I'm not a veterinarian, but I can act as a veterinarian. It's exactly the same because at a lower sort of, at the sort of level of graduates, you have done five years of education and you have received a degree that guarantees, you know, all it is, a degree, all it is, is basically a stamp of quality that the government gives to you.

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I say you pass this training and you're at this level. That's what it is. So ensures public protection. So anybody that is in a profession will say, no, I practice this because I have earned the right to practice that. Correct? And I have earned the right because I have passed all these tests, university test, university program that is audited, that is controlled, that is regulated.

and all that, and then I become a veterinarian in such a way that someone off the street cannot practice veterinary medicine because he doesn't have that. Well, in reality, a residency program is that. It's a program that is audited, is regulated, is controlled, so in a way that you are prepared to perform advanced procedures. Now, what happens is that illegally,

anybody that graduates as a veterinarian can do any procedure as well he or she pleases.

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And that also needs to start, we need to start to look at that with different texts. Because certainly it doesn't happen in human medicine. And what happens in human medicine, first of all, is illegal. But also, if you were to make a mistake, I think you would think twice about the consequences that would be the case. And that in the current medicine, we're still not at that level unfortunately, but I think that we need to respect the profession. And by respecting, meaning that everybody needs to be self-aware of vulnerability. And I think everybody wins when this happens. I know it's difficult now because it's a lot of, of course, economical pressures and money can be made. And when that comes into place, then people gets difficult. But let's think about from the perspective of a human doctor and your own daughter and your own son.

What would you do? And I think that should be the criteria that it should die over time medicine evolves as well.

Host Julie Rosser

Yeah, very interesting. So while we're on the topic, I've heard some rumors recently saying that EBVS is just a project of the elite and again, not necessarily relevant to the majority of veterinary medicine and especially clinical practice. How do you think we can be better ourselves as specialists in communicating our value so that we can start to dispel these kinds of rumors?

Guest Antonio Cruz

I think the word elite, it has an undeserved reputation and connotation. There is elite in any field.

In human science or whatever, in any field, you will have Nobel Prizes. I mean, that's not to say that anybody is less or anybody is more. It's simply saying that there is people that has achieved a greater degree of knowledge and experience in a certain area. And I think we as a society should be proud of this because that's how advanced is produced. We need to let elite... You need to allow it to happen because it's going to have good repercussions over the rest. You know, was Einstein an elite physics professor? Yes. And so what? Thank God he existed. But that doesn't mean that we don't collaborate with the rest of the profession. And that doesn't mean that we are participating in the progress of the profession. We're here to help. And I think this is what is important. We are here to help.

We are all veterinarians. We all became veterinarians for very common reasons. And those are that we love animals, we like to help others. We are not particularly looking for sort of huge recognition in reality. Overall, I think we all have a veterinarian inside us. And this is very important because at our core values,

We are very similar. And I think these core values is what is interesting for us to share as a profession and for us to find the common ground as a profession. We are the elite. We are not elitist. And this is a very different, very different connotation. To be elitist means that, yeah, you consider yourself separated from the rest because you're, in your own mind, you're better.

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To be elite doesn't mean that we are elites. Everybody is elite in their own world. Someone could be a practitioner, a family practitioner, and be an elite family practitioner. Of course, because that is a very needed figure within the continuum and within the team that provides health care to an animal. So that's why I said that nobody is less or more. Someone can have more knowledge in a certain area.

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And other people can have more knowledge in another area. But we are elite. Well, we are elite in a certain area. Yes, we can be elite in anesthesia or can be elite in surgery or can be elite in ophthalmology. But secondly, someone that is elite in anesthesia is probably not going to be elite in ophthalmology or is not going to be elite in family veterinary medicine. So I think this needs to be understood that we are part of the team.

We're part of the progress. We are here to help. We're not here to compete. And we are here to basically glue all of our values, our core values, as veterinarians, because in the end, we are all veterinarians. So I hope I made myself clear that I think this message needs to be...needs to be understood.

Host Julie Rosser

Yeah, I think that this is really essential. And I love focusing on core values. Because when I heard this rumor, you know, I was less concerned about the word elite and more concerned about the word project. And I think you really hit it right the nail on the head with the idea of coming back to the common core values and that at the end of the day, we are all veterinarians and we're part of the team to advance the available care for the patient. I think this is excellent. This is the most essential point. So I have some other general questions, but I know people are really excited, particularly our members, are really, really invested in hearing more about recognition. So I do want to make sure that we still get to the main entree. And I know you're going to be speaking about this at the EBVS Congress coming up in April. Really looking forward to that. But maybe you could give us a little preview about your journey to achieve recognition for specialist titles in Spain.

Guest Antonio Cruz

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Well, this journey, I mean, I only travel the last stretch of it. I guess maybe I've been lucky enough that it's been the last. But, you know, it started already about 11 years ago and some colleagues that they contributed and they started to dialogue, you know. When you start that kind of...dialogue in a profession, regardless what it is, you have to be extremely careful because obviously some people may feel a little bit threatened by someone else that is coming and he wants to take a part of the pie, you know. And I think the previous conversations that happened throughout these 11 years were not fruitful because I think when you break a deal, in a way,

Certain conditions need to become confluent. And these conditions, one of them particularly is that everybody that talks is able to listen, is able to understand the other person, is able to respect what the other person may be feeling, and is able to be brave enough to take certain steps and to defend that.

So you have to go prepared with a large degree of humbleness and understanding where everybody's coming from. You know, I mean, certainly we come in Spain now, particularly, we come from, I mean, in the 50s, Spain was very poor. It's only been about 50 years, 60 years since Spain has evolved as a developed country, and the changes, they've been many, and they've been very significant. And, you know, some of the concepts that they were ingrained during that time, they were still sort of overflowing through these days. So, you know, the concept of sort of the game started with the veterinarian by the public and so on. What's happening is also in Spain is that it's an important dichotomy happening here. We have the urban centers that they are a lot more. What I want to say is that there are two different ones. The role of the veterinarian in the rural areas and the role of the veterinarian in urban areas are very different. They're starting to come together, of course, but we're still a fairly strong rural mentality country. And because of that, the perceived economic value of the animals is not the same. And this has only changed in the last probably 15 to 20 years, which coincidentally is about the same time where all the specialties started to develop

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This is a big, big change that has happened in the last 15 or 20 years. So we need to understand what is veterinary medicine coming from. And then the people that they are the interlocutors, they need to be willing to talk, to listen to each other, and to forward this piece of advancement, which is the work of mission. Now, what was happening in the state, what's still happening, is that...a veterinarian would graduate and there is absolutely no structure what to do after graduation in the clinical area. Of course, if you want to go to university, you can go into some of the avenues that an academic career provides you, but an academic career is isolated into the academic world. It's not into the clinical process.

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So people, when they finish, basically they say, what do I do not? How do I get part of training? Where do I go? Do I go to this course? And so the course, this doesn't, so on. So I

did have several meetings with the president of the Spanish veterinary organization. And the bottom line was that what we needed to do, more importantly, was to create a structure of the veterinary profession.

It interrupted the veterinary profession into something that it was easy to understand by the professionals, easy to understand by the public, that it would have an avenue for someone finishing the degree to kind of progress. And that also had to be recognized by the industry at large because that had to be translated into wealth and monetary value. In other words, salaries. So salaried people with better training.

This was, I think this was accepted. The president created an ad hoc committee and we were 11 people invited by their professional experiences. And I must say that all the 11 people of the committee were brilliant, were excellent. They were all came with a lot of experience in their own fields. There were other diplomats and there were people that there was no diplomat, but they had a lot of experience in their field.

we could see eye to eye and we'd sort of talk and make a proposal. And this proposal was to create an academic structure, academic meaning professional, it was a professional structure, which it would be basically three levels, graduate or licensed. I mean, in Spain, before we came in grade, in veterinary medicine, we were licensed. So anyway, bachelor of veterinary science, if you wish.

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I mean, it's an intermediate level, and then there is a superior level. And the diplomats, they've been accepted into this level as the only ones. So it's going to be called a diploma of the Organization of Spanish Veterinarians, but basically to access that, only diplomats can. So we've been recognized as the top trained people. And then the intermediate level, basically, they have created a program that is approved by VetCEE, so it has an intermediate level of credits and an intermediate level of expertise. So a new graduate could go into this intermediate and then it could progress into a diplomate. It is important for us to start at this level because now the road that it needs to travel at the moment is that the Ministry of Health needs to accept this and it needs to recognize that at a ministerial level. Once this is accepted at a ministerial level, then the universities and the Ministry of Education will start to recruit diplomats officially into their programs. And I think this is sort of how the circle will be closed. At the moment, a lot of universities are already incorporating diplomats, but not in their own capacity as diplomats. And then once this happens, then the educational programs will also start broken up and we will be producing our own diplomats in an official way. It's been good that we are at this point. It's a beginning. It's not the end. It's the beginning.

Host Julie Rosser

Well, and I think it really illustrates how complex of a value chain that we are as a profession. And I know there are a lot of other countries throughout Europe that are experiencing similar challenges in trying to streamline the complexities and how complicated our workflows can be also in the eye of the public, right? So I think this is a really interesting model for other countries. But I also want to point out from a broader perspective, we still are experiencing similar hurdles in European-level recognition as EBVS, right? And, you know, I think Spain is such a linchpin in this program because what I didn't realize until probably the last six months is for the European level of food security and food production, Spain is key. You know, it's leading the European market in most production animals. Most species of production animals and therefore, you know, security and access to food is critical. It's really coming down to Spain and a few other major players in the market. So I think that this could also really be a way to demonstrate that leverage at the level of the European Union and policymakers there. Would you agree?

Guest Antonio Cruz

Oh, absolutely. I mean, Spain has a very strict policies on food safety in animal production. And I agree, not a lot of people is aware of this. And the veterinarians are in every step of the chain. And, you know, we are doing a campaign now as a profession to educate the public about what the role of veterinarians are in everything you eat every day. And now, of course, with...

potential zoonosis and the avian flu coming and with the pandemia coming and so on. But it was surprisingly enough that we were very dismissed during the pandemic by the Ministry of Health. And in reality, I mean, we have a lot more knowledge on technology and control, disease control, than any other profession. Someone would have asked us, for instance, about the coronavirus, you know.

We probably have said fairly quickly how difficult of a virus it is because we have bad experience in other species, basically. But it's slowly, slowly changing, but Spain is very straight. And we have veterinarians in all of those points of the chain, from the product, the producer, to the tailor. And in every step, you know, if the veterinarian would not be there, we could not ensure the health of...society and the safety of what we eat and so on. So, I mean, I hope that zero can see that because I know that there's other countries maybe a little bit more liberal where they don't have veterinarians doing this or they have people with other types of intermediate training and so on. But certainly the profession in Spain, even though it is about 85% people that does clinical practice at our very big core, and that's how the Council of Veterinarians of Spain continues to maintain that, is about food safety, animal production, and safety of society. And that is, that's a key chain link in our profession. Absolutely essential.

Host Julie Rosser

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Well, and coming back to your point about zoonosis and infectious disease prevention, you know, we were filming with our film crew in Barcelona in September. And my creative director came back with one soundbite that he just felt was so groundbreaking from Spain, where there are around every urban center in Spain, wildlife specialists whose job it is to go out and make sure that there's no pandemic threats to the urban areas. And I was so glad that he could put it this way because he's not a veterinarian or a specialist, right? Because it's just such an accessible soundbite of really important information that we can give to the public, I think.

Guest Antonio Cruz

Well, I think the public is completely unaware of the threats that we face. We have African swine fever that is progressing really quick. And in Spain, particularly, if African swine fever comes to a tremendous economic impact in Spain, where I think we are the second swine producer in the world. Don't cite me on that because I'm not an expert in swine by any means, but I read some of this. But anyways, it does only make sense you know, that we can control all of this. And with the zoonosis and the pandemics, it's exactly the same. We had, for instance, some examples. There are many, but one example that I know is that the foot and mouth disease epidemic happened, for instance, in Canada in the 50s. It had an impact of a mega million dollars, and it was actually discovered by a veterinarian in the field.

It was the sentinel case. It was a veterinarian in the field. You have the interaction of nature with humans. There is a veterinarian in there that is ensuring that that is a safe interaction. And if something were to happen, there has to be a veterinarian present to make sure that it gives... First, that it recognizes...those signs that it is the pulse of alarm and things can happen quickly before things are spread and causing more damage. So I think society needs to be very aware of this. I mean, you can say, well, you veterinarians, you're a foreigner and it looks like it was only veterinarians. It's like, well, I can tell you that there is veterinarians and other things. Of course, everybody's important, but I think we've been suffering from lack of recognition societal level for a long time. And I just hope that going back to recognition of specialization and specialties, of course, there is specialties in bovine production, in swine medicine, in [public] health, animal health. So all of these things, you know, we're going to have a veterinarian that is specialized and is not elitist. It simply means that he knows more on that topic than other veterinarians because you've been trained. And of course, is prepared for that.

Host Julie Rosser

Exactly. I mean, we're service providers, right? Whether we're a general practitioner in veterinary medicine or whether we're specialized in one niche area of veterinary medicine, at the end of the day, we're service providers and we need one another in order to achieve the best outcome for the patient and for the public.

Guest Antonio Cruz

Of course. I mean, it goes without saying, you know, again, the case example for a consumer is going to be that her dog, her cat, is going to be sick one day. It's not going to vote you on a specialist right away. It's going to vote your family doctor. The family doctor is going to perform whatever it needs to do. It's going to say, what? You know, your dog is going to need a specialist because, well, I don't have these tools or this goes beyond my scope of knowledge.

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I have my nose, I know what it is, and so on and so forth. So you need to go to so-and-so. So, you know, it's part of a team. As I said at the beginning, we are all continuing in the healthcare and the team of healthcare of an animal. And then once, in my case, for instance, I finish operating on a horse, or your case, and you say, okay, we have done our work. It needs to go home now, but it needs to go on, you know, rehabilitation. It needs to go on follow-up.

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It needs to have bandage changes. It needs to be seen every two, three days and so on. So again, it's not any different than that human medicine. It's basically absolutely the same system. And I think people need to see it that way. And again, as I said before, it's like, let's look at the human system and the human process and be that the narrow in which we look ourselves apart and say, okay, let's try to work in that sort of...that sort of structure. And I think it's also, you know, when we talk about referring veterinarians and even for the specialist community, one of the main points of discussion right now is around workforce shortages and retention. And I think that this is a vital point in maintaining workforce distribution.

It's not that the referring veterinarian has to handle everything on their own. They have access to us. We're there to be utilized to help their patients. You know, if a specialist can help them, then please call. But it's not that we're there to replace them, right? It's all about distribution and trying to make sure that the needed workforces are available, right? I think the lack of knowledge of the demands of the market.

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But that lack of knowledge has led us to a situation that we have an asymmetric market demand. You know, we have areas of the market that they are flooded with veterinarians, and there are other areas of the market that they don't have enough veterinarians. And the

reason is because we have not really looked into the market and said, but what are the needs? How we want to plan for those needs? What is the profession evolving in the next 20, 25 years? You know, what other facilities are going to be needed or areas of knowledge are going to be developed in 2025 years, you know. And because of this sort of lack of knowledge, now we get to the situation where, well, everybody wants to be a dog doctor. Well, maybe we don't need like a gazillion dog doctors, you know, and we need some more people that they're going to be cow doctors or whatever else. So, and that...I think that lack of knowledge plus the indiscriminate opening of veterinary schools, particularly in Spain, I think this has led us to... In Spain, and I think that's in Europe, and then in Spain is a situation that is, in my mind, is catastrophic, really, because the main thing comes from the lack of the profession. You have an input on the profession itself.

in the sort of different focuses of veterinary schools. And then they say, okay, hey, we're going to need and have you thought about this? So it's been a teamwork. It's not being a politician that is, oh, we're just going to open another veterinary school. Why? Have you consulted with the profession? What do you do with the ones that they are unemployed or they are unable to find themselves properly or whatever?

The idea is that someone that chooses a career, it would have an opportunity to have a job that dignifies his life or life with a good salary, with a salary that is in accordance to the effort that this person is put into the training. And it would not have to be for enough 50 years kind of scrambling with different jobs.

And in situations that you would have to take a job because you wouldn't have another job. So it has to put up with situations that they are probably untenable. And therefore, we have a very large rate of depression, suicide, abandonment of the profession. This is tragic. It's really tragic. And this actually requires a task force immediately, at least in Spain.

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I've said that before in other forums. It's like the profession right now should be getting together with politicians, with the universities, and having a pass force that would address this situation because it is an emergency. And some people don't seem to hear the importance that it has.

Host Julie Rosser

I completely agree with you, Antonio. I'm a huge proponent of understanding our market and knowing our market and really analyzing it for exactly this type of thing. Like if we don't have the knowledge and numbers, then how can we how can we ever solve this problem, basically? So this is actually going to be one of the speakers is going to address, just the tip of the iceberg, of course, on this topic at the EBVS Congress that's coming up in April in Belgrade. And I think you were already highlighting that we do need to come together. And one of the questions I had written down before we signed on for this episode was, I'd love

to hear your comments. And I think this is serendipitous coming together. Why is it important? that we come together? For example, you know, this is the first EBVS Congress, but why is it important that we bring, you know, specialists from all different disciplines from all over Europe together with other stakeholders, with people from FVE, with policymakers, with legislators, with university rectors? Why is this important, in your opinion?

Guest Antonio Cruz

Great. I mean, it's a super initiative. But the reason why it was important is because we are all together on this. It's a tremendously complex problem because, for instance, many university educators, their priority is to progress in the academic ladder. And this has nothing to do with sort of the market. And in reality, everybody needs to understand that you are educating someone. But in reality, they are producing a person that needs to fit in a market in order to have a job that is well paid and you can live a life that is a good life. Anyways, it's important to understand what the market is and it's important to communicate this with the university. What does the market want? But when you go talk to the people that own clinics, you know, a lot of people are somewhat desperate because the people come as new graduates. They are not nearly at the level that they want them to be. And then it's like, okay, the level you want them to be is unrealistic.

44:22

And then that's where the dialogue starts, right? It's like, okay, well, we cannot produce that to you. I mean, in Spain right now, there's a big fight to increase the veterinary degree for one year. You know, the thing is, like, it's such a broad degree, and there is so much knowledge that I also empathize with the, you know, administrators and many of the educators that they saw. How are we going to teach all of this? It's impossible, you know. A veterinary group is expensive. And I say, okay, if you want someone to have, you know, models to train and you want to have a model lab and this and that, all of that takes a significant amount of money and significant amount of resources and so on. So it's like, okay, well, then the politicians should know. It's like, you guys need to put more money because this is just... You know, where are the bottlenecks? Where are the errors? I'm not saying that I know what the errors are. I'm just saying that the dialogue is necessary. And it's very necessary. And it's becoming an emergency that everybody can sit together and say, because maybe it's just because it's a lack of knowledge. And maybe the politicians say, oh, well, I didn't know that. Oh, well.

45:46

We've only been saying this for like, you know, 20 years. Well, I didn't know it. Okay, so here. Or someone can go and say, well, I wish it was. You know, so I think this needs to be solved by the profession at large.

Host Julie Rosser

Yeah, I couldn't agree with you more. I think we could continue this conversation forever, Antonio. It's so valuable and it's so on point. I do want to be respectful of your time, though. I have a few last questions for you. So my closing questions are these two. I'd love to hear what you find most fulfilling about your work. And I'd also love to hear what you would like to tell the public, particularly whoever's interested in learning more about veterinary specialization.

Guest Antonio Cruz

46:40

The first question is what I find more fulfilling. I was going to say that it really depends on the day. Yeah, that's fair. I think overall, if I have a keen student or a resident, a keen one, sometimes those are difficult to come by also. But to see this person, these people close and to know that I've been part of that at some point; not as the only instigator, but part of it, part of our journey. You know, seeking the likes of an animal or helping an owner to enjoy their course again and so on is highly convenient as well. And it'd be hard to say what is more cool. That's why I said it depends on the day. But if I would have a good all in a scale, you know, I think to know that I...help someone to flourish. I think that's the best, yeah. And the second question, you have to repeat it to me again.

Host Julie Rosser

No problem. Just what would you like to tell the public who are interested in learning more about veterinary specialization, whether they're clients or students or people who are just interested in animal health and welfare?

Guest Antonio Cruz

48:06

What would you, what do you wish they knew about us as specialists? Well, I would wish that they would know the amount of effort that it takes, the passion that we put into our work and all the things that we do aside of looking after the animals and how we really, the point that, you know, we take their course with us at home. We think about, we talk about it at dinner or at lunch.

48:35

We share it. It's something that is in our heads that we worry, that we understand, and that we are here to help. I think it's important for them to know that we are, you know, we are more than what the face makes the face, basically. And of course, that if they want to know more and so on, they should always use EVBS or the...source of information and they can get themselves more educated and more informed about what it is to become a specialist.

Host Julie Rosser

Well, and I think, you know, EBVS is just an umbrella organization at the end of the day. We're nothing without our members and without specialists. And one thing I know about our members and our specialists is that they're very available and very approachable. And so I think, you know our website is always available. People can reach out to me or anyone else at the staff or the executive committee of EBVS. But I think, you know, we're so lucky to have people like you, Antonio, who are just willing to show up and offer their time and talk to people and be there when people have questions. And I just think we're really lucky that our members are so available and approachable. And I want to thank you for being part of that. Yeah, thank you.

Guest Antonio Cruz

50:00

Definitely. I mean, I think if you...Ask any diplomat about, you know, what is about to be a specialist. They'll be, like, so desiring of telling you all this day. You know, it's like me. You'll have to shove me at it.

Host Julie Rosser

No, come on. I really think this conversation has been so exciting and hopefully very fruitful for our listeners. We're definitely going to be running it as soon as we can get it shipped off to Spotify.

50:30

And so I think it'll be a really nice primer for some of these conversations that we're hoping to have in April and continue thereafter. So thanks again for your time. Really looking forward to seeing you there. And I know we'll be in touch. So thank you again and have a great evening. Likewise. Thank you for having me. Thanks, Antonio. Thanks to our listeners. Talk to you guys soon. Bye now.