

## Case Study Competition Hones Veterinary Students' Practice Skills

Silene Young, DVM

### Highlights of the winning cases submitted for the 2010 Veterinary Pet Insurance®—Veterinary Business Management Association Student Case Study Competition

VPI® has sponsored this student competition for the past seven years. The competition kicks off each year at the VBMA annual meeting held during the North American Veterinary Conference. Over 125 veterinary students from around the country attended the event this year.

The 2010 competition attracted more than 170 student entries representing 25 schools with VBMA chapters. Veterinary students are asked to identify an interesting case, write a comprehensive SOAP and submit as much backup material—lab work, case notes, radiographic images, histopathology, etc.—as they wish. They also submit an invoice and calculate pet owner reimbursement using VPI's new Major Medical Plan.

The VPI Major Medical Plan is the company's most comprehensive protection, offering the highest reimbursement for accidental injuries, emergencies and illnesses, including cancer.

#### Case #1: Bear



*A 14-year-old MI German shepherd mix presents to a hospital in California for a lump in his neck and is simultaneously diagnosed with a testicular mass, prostatitis, dermatitis, a splenic nodule and develops pneumonia just prior to surgery.*

This case, submitted by Maya Lottati, a second-year student at the University of California, Davis, reminds us that veterinarians can help clients to extend the quality of life, even for older pets.

Bear presented for the palpable mass in his neck. During the comprehensive exam, a plaque-like dermatitis was discovered on his abdomen and his testicular mass was identified. An abdominal ultrasound was conducted as part of his screening

process, revealing an enlarged prostate and a splenic nodule. Needle aspirates, radiographs and blood work were all evaluated to confirm diagnoses and identify surgical preparedness.

The splenic nodule and dermatitis were determined to be benign and the prostatic enlargement did not appear to be cancerous. Blood work revealed a mild azotemia (mildly elevated potassium, calcium, BUN and creatinine) but no other abnormalities. The neck mass was identified as a salivary adenocarcinoma. There were actually multiple neoplastic masses in the one testicle (the other had not descended and was removed when Bear was young). With the evaluation complete, he was scheduled for surgery to remove the salivary and testicular masses. However, three days later and just prior to surgery, Bear presented for respiratory distress and was diagnosed with pneumonia. He was treated with antibiotics and re-evaluated two weeks later to confirm recovery.

Two months later, Bear was able to undergo surgical removal of the malignant salivary and testicular masses and he recovered well from his procedures.

## Case #2: Max



*In Ohio, a two-year-old MN DSH presents with multiple fractures (skull, mandible and leg), neurologic trauma and shock after a run-in with a car. After post-recovery and surgical repair, develops multiple complications.*

Max's case, submitted by Ashley Bedarf, a second-year student from The Ohio State University, is a great example of a pet with multiple ongoing complications, illustrating how pet insurance can help the pet owners afford to give their cat another eight lives.

Max originally presented on an emergency basis for severe trauma after being hit by a car. He was hospitalized and treated for neurologic trauma and shock. A CT scan on the second day revealed multiple skull fractures in addition to previously identified mandibular and femoral fractures.

After several days of medical stabilization, Max underwent surgical repair of his mandibular and femoral fractures and was released from the hospital.

A few days later, his owner returned with concerns regarding Max's inappetence. After an ultrasound of his abdomen and re-evaluation of his condition, a fractured tooth was identified as the most likely cause of the inappetence. A feeding tube was placed to help provide nutrition while Max recovered from his multiple oral traumas.

Another week or so later, Max returned again, and was diagnosed with a joint infection in the area of his femoral repair. After attempts to treat the leg

with antibiotics failed, and six weeks after his initial presentation, Max was under anesthesia again to complete a rear limb amputation.

Ashley reports that Max has recovered well and is happily back to his old tricks, climbing up on the kitchen counters to locate fun things to play with and tasty things to eat.

## Case #3: Chief



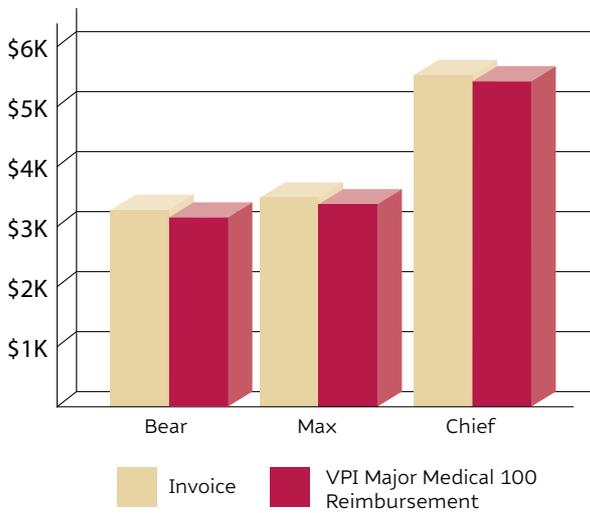
*A Florida hospital takes in a four-year-old MN American Bulldog with a ruptured jejunal leiomyosarcoma, resulting in an intestinal perforation and septic peritonitis.*

The final case review is the four-year-old American Bulldog, Chief, who presented as an emergency case to the University of Florida and was diagnosed with a jejunal mass that had ruptured, resulting in severe peritonitis. Chief had a full pre-surgical evaluation, including thoracic radiographs to check for metastases. He was treated with fluids and antibiotics, and underwent emergency intestinal resection and anastomosis to remove the mass and damaged intestine.

Chief was hospitalized for a full week to manage the peritonitis and monitor his recovery. He received transfusions, fluids, antibiotics and ongoing pain management as well as assorted blood tests and other treatments to manage his condition.

Kimberly Ackerman, the third-year student from the University of Florida who submitted the case, was pleased to report that Chief recovered well from his ordeal.

## Level of Reimbursement



**Bear:** The total invoice was \$3,112.05, of which the VPI Major Medical 100 plan would have paid \$3,012.05 after the \$100 annual deductible.

**Max:** The total invoice was \$3,445.84, of which the VPI Major Medical 100 plan would have paid out \$3,281.48 (\$100 deductible and no reimbursement for finance charges totaling \$64.36).

**Chief:** The total invoice was \$5,607.97. Reimbursement from VPI under the Major Medical 100 plan in this case would have been \$5,478.92.

## Meet The Winners of the 2010 VPI/VBMA Competition

Maya, Ashley and Kimberly represent the future of the veterinary profession. The education, dedication and hard work that these students exhibit will continue to be rewarded as they head into practice to treat America's animals. They are all members of their schools' VBMA organizations.

Maya is originally from Maryland and after receiving her bachelor's degree, moved to California to pursue a PhD at the University of Southern California, investigating the role of visceral obesity on type-2 diabetes. She is now focused on her veterinary studies and hopes to practice companion animal medicine upon graduation.

Ashley completed her bachelor's degree in biology and animal science in Massachusetts and spent time working on a production sheep, goat and cattle farm as well as in a companion animal practice. She has completed her second year at The Ohio State University, is President of the OSU VBMA chapter, and hopes to pursue a career in mixed-animal practice upon graduation.

Kimberly, also from Massachusetts, moved to Florida for her undergraduate studies in marine biology and remained after graduation, participating in various marine mammal rescue and research programs as well as working in a small animal veterinary practice before entering veterinary school.

*"Participating in this competition was a great opportunity to learn just how easy it is to file an insurance claim with VPI. I learned how inexpensive and beneficial it is to insure your pets. I chose that particular case because accidents are common and many owners can't afford medical care for their pets when a catastrophic accident occurs. I definitely believe that having an insurance policy for your pet is important, and had these owners been covered by VPI, they could have saved an incredible amount of money. I can now help my clients when they have questions about pet insurance coverage and claims. Thank you!"*

—Crystal Sampson, student winner from the University of Missouri

Cases in the VPI/VBMA Student Case Study are judged on presentation, originality and accuracy of insurance reimbursement calculation. The top three

cases presented here received the highest scores overall. Individual school winners included:

Emily Marcus, Colorado State University  
Ilyssa Meren, Cornell University  
Jennifer Dinwiddie, Kansas State University  
Peter Armstrong, Louisiana State University  
Thomas Robinson, Michigan State University  
Kelly McDaniel, Mississippi State University  
Amy Lehman Etingue, NC State University  
Colt Dietz, Oklahoma State University  
Christopher Fulkerson, Purdue University  
Kate Ackerson, Ross University  
Susan Dugat, Texas A&M University  
Ashley Bedarf, The Ohio State University

Lily Nieh, Tufts University  
Meghan Shoemaker, Tuskegee University  
Maya Lottati, University of California, Davis  
Kimberly Ackerman, University of Florida  
Andrew Pace, University of Georgia  
Lisette Farve, University of Illinois  
Lisa Thompson, University of Minnesota  
Crystal Sampson, University of Missouri  
Ericka Carroll, University of Pennsylvania  
Baye Williamson, University of Tennessee  
Cynthia Johnson, Virginia-Maryland Regional  
College of Veterinary Medicine  
Laura Baltodano, Washington State University  
Kimberly Bridges, Western University of  
Health Sciences

Veterinary Pet Insurance has been providing pet owners with insurance services for over 28 years. With 11 veterinarians and over 60 veterinary technicians on staff, VPI puts the “veterinary” in pet insurance. VPI delivers unparalleled expertise and service to customers, including coverage for ongoing chronic conditions without disease-associated annual premium increases. By supporting the veterinary profession at conferences, through sponsored CE programs and in the veterinary schools, VPI continues its commitment to improving the health of companion animals.

In addition to the Student Case Competition, VPI also sponsors practice management education programs that are part of the curriculum at many of the nation’s veterinary schools. Program speakers Jim Wilson, DVM, JD and Mark Opperman, CVPM, provide students with an overview of good business practices. Robin Kachka, Cornell class of 2010 wrote, *“I am writing to thank VPI for funding speakers for our Veterinary Practice Management class at Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine. What I have taken from this class so far has been invaluable practical information that I would not have gained anywhere else in my education.”*



Dr. Silene Young is a graduate of The Ohio State University. She first worked as an emergency clinician in a 24-hour veterinary hospital in Ohio while designing and building a companion animal practice. She later continued to practice companion animal emergency medicine in Washington and California. In 2004, Dr. Young joined Bayer Animal Health as Senior Technical Services Veterinarian. In 2007, she was promoted to Manager of Special Projects within the Veterinary Services department at Bayer’s US Animal Health headquarters and was later promoted to Product Manager. Dr. Young joined Veterinary Pet Insurance Company as Director of Professional Services in 2010. She has served as a board member for the Wild West Veterinary Conference and the Kansas State Animal Response Team, and is a previous member of the California Veterinary Medical Association Legislative Committee.

