

# The Information Problem

The Pew Commission's review of veterinary education in North America (1993), stated that "one of the most important and pressing needs in veterinary medicine is to focus the professional education process and the practice of veterinary medicine, on the ability to find and use information rather than on the ability to memorise. An essential element to the success of this major undertaking, is the availability of veterinary information systems so powerful, that a veterinarian (or student) cannot afford not to use it."

This statement is quite a challenge, but it is the truth. Our profession needs a solution to the information problem facing us. We are providing professional services to an increasingly well informed client base with growing expectations of what we can provide for them and their animals. However, we are increasingly faced with information overload with the number and variety of journals, textbooks, audiotapes, videos, etc. all demanding our attention. It is hard to know what to look at and when and how to make a quality judgement about their content. Fortunately an information system now exists that delivers the requirements proposed by the Pew Commission.

- **Vets are often expected to be omniscient by regulators and animal owners**
- **More educated market with owner's expectation ever higher**
- **Client communication** - Ability to communicate effectively to the clients is almost more important than technical competence of the veterinarian.
- **Volume** - Knowledge is doubling every 10 years and so it is increasingly hard to keep up. Textbooks are inevitably out of date because of the publishing process.
- **Change** - Veterinary research journals document the changes in knowledge but research papers are not written for quick access by time poor clinicians, they are written for academics to detail their research.
- **Accessibility** - Often a textbook is not where it is supposed to be in the practice library or is elsewhere in the practice
- **Quality & consistency** - Textbooks, journals and different information sources are written in very different styles and by authors of different clinical experience.