Too often, advice is not something we are keen to hear. As students, although eager, we are often ill-positioned to place it in perspective and once we qualify it can be all too easily seen as criticism. Not all advice is sound, not all advice is proven, and what we do with it is entirely up to us. One thing is certain though: if we don’t hear it we’ll never know if it was any use at all.

The goal of ‘Vet Coach’ is to provide a compilation of career reflections and guidance, from which readers can pick and choose the pearls of wisdom that may help them from graduation along their career path. These reflections are provided by an array of over 90 veterinarians working as general practitioners, lecturers, researchers and in industry, having qualified globally from Liverpool to Montreal, Lithuania, and beyond. Each of these individuals has been asked the question ‘What do you wish you knew then that you know now?’

The book is laid out in two sections, the first being the ‘reflections’ themselves and the second the not inconsiderable CVs of those supplying the former.

The first section reads somewhat haphazardly, with each contributor appearing to have been given free rein on the content of their entry. The relevance of the advice will vary widely depending upon the reader; some of it you will have heard before, and some you may even disagree with, but there will be something in there for almost everyone to take away.

The freedom given to the authors and the lack of quality control has meant that, too often, useful guidance is drowned out by life stories. The average author age weighs in at around 50 years old, reducing the book’s relevance in a rapidly changing and ever-progressing profession. The book has a heavy bias toward those in academia, with many contributors holding diplomas, professorships or PhDs. While this will be a definite draw for some, it may discourage those seeking the revelations of general practitioners.

This book is not something you would read in one sitting, but neither is that its goal. Its content lies somewhere between a collection of memoirs and ‘How to survive life after vet school.’ There are gems of good counsel and these cannot be undervalued, and because of this the book is one that would be well placed in the vet school library to be browsed through by students.

Ian Beamish
Been there, done that

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