My working week: Padraig Egan

Padraig Egan is a surgical resident at Fitzpatrick Referrals in Surrey. Here, he describes a week on-call.

Monday
I’m currently assigned to the orthopaedics and neurology service at Fitzpatrick Referrals. This is my on-call week so I am covering my clinics and overnight emergencies for the next seven days. Every week kicks off with journal club on Monday morning that starts at 7.30 am. The team of residents gather to discuss relevant journal articles published during the past month. We try to get through everything that’s been published relating to orthopaedics and neurology in Veterinary Surgery, Journal of Small Animal Practice, Veterinary Comparative Orthopaedics and Traumatology, In Practice and, of course, Vet Record.

Tuesday
No calls overnight on Monday – a cracking start to the week. The day begins with postsurgical rechecks, rechecks and more rechecks. These are interspersed by the arrival of a ‘surprise’ second side tibial plateau-levelling osteotomy, which I had mistakenly booked into a recheck slot. Tuesday comes to a close at a respectable 7 pm and it’s off to Hankley Common to walk my rather poorly behaved dachshund called Obi (yes, it is Star Wars related).

Wednesday
The shrill sound of my phone ringing at 4.30 am wakes me from my slumber; a patient is having some cardiac arrhythmias and the duty vet wants to run some drugs past me before giving them. I am meant to be in the clinic for 7.45 am to join the neurology rounds, but I failed this week – my Olympic gold medal-level skills of switching my phone to ‘snooze’ meant that I didn’t make it in on time.
A couple of fractures and a handful of rechecks make Wednesday a steady day.

Thursday
I have more academic commitments on Thursday morning. I drag myself out of bed at 5.30 am as I forgot to/avoided reading the chapters for this morning’s surgery club. I can now thoroughly recommend Chapter 52 of Tobias’ Small Animal Surgery – it’s a riveting read.

Friday
I dread Fridays. You can never predict what’s going to happen. Manic or quiet – take your pick. I get to the clinic by 8 am and start clearing the week’s backlog of radiographic reports. This particular Friday takes the manic route and I find myself admitting a spinal and two tibial fractures in the space of 90 minutes. Despite that, the patients are all worked up and the surgery is completed by 7 pm. A couple of hours of letter writing finishes up my day and I escape for a quick pint (of lemonade) by 9 pm.

Saturday
I get another rude awakening at 5.30 am when the clinic calls to say that a fracture case is on its way. One bleary-eyed consult later and the little cat is admitted for surgery later in the day. The resident (me) takes over caring for the cases of surgeons who are off over the weekend, so the first few hours are taken up with bandage changes, discharging patients and updating clients on their pet’s progress.

The rest of Saturday goes to plan – assisting the specialist with this morning’s admission, catching up with paperwork – then, with advice calls done, I manage to escape at 6 pm. The on-call phone remains quiet overnight, but I still wake up in a panic at 2 am convinced I’ve slept through a call. Thankfully, I’ve obviously been dreaming and I go back to sleep.

Sunday
Sunday proves itself to be a rare creature. A quiet day, which is almost unheard of. I do a round of the patients at the clinic when I arrive, discharge those that are fit to go home, and then spend a few hours catching up on reading for Monday morning’s journal club. By Sunday evening we have managed to deplete the inpatient population from 28 on Saturday morning to nine. Thankfully, they all left the clinic well on the road to recovery, so it’s time to go home for a Sunday roast and put my feet up in front of the TV. I feel I’ve gotten off quite lightly this week, the gods of on-call (yes they exist) have graced me with a relatively quiet week. Now I’m on-call-free for two weeks.

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