

**Westside Story**

*Richard Healy, Westside Veterinary Hospital, Cork, tells of his journey, culminating in the acquisition of VetSCOPE and how he embraced the new technology*

**Page 1**

**The Pain Barrier**

*Samantha Lindley, addressing the recent Merial European Pain Management Symposium, offers a method of assessing pain experienced by an animal*

**Page 2**

**Pet Bereavement**

*Could a certificate in bereavement counselling undertaken by one of the practice team be an important and timely investment in resources?*

**Page 3**

**Smart Thinking**

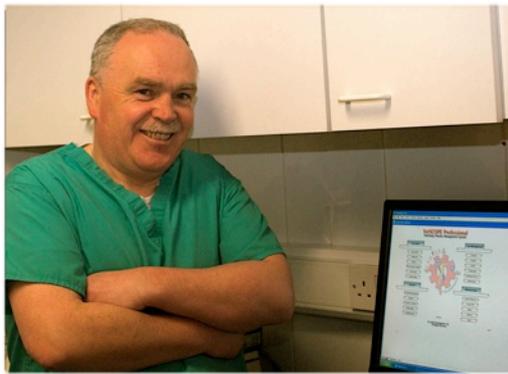
*The veterinary profession has more use than most for telephone technology. Damien Foley takes a look at the four main smartphone contenders*

**Page 4**

## WESTSIDE STORY

*When a reluctant Richard Healy was eventually required to enter the computer age, he explains how VetSCOPE make the journey easy*

With a CV that includes a number of years in greyhound practice in Australia before setting up one of Cork city's most respected small animal practices, Richard Healy has embraced many challenges in his career. Until 2008, however, computers were largely off the 'new experiences' list. After years successfully avoiding them, Richard's aversion to PCs finally came to a head two years ago when compliance with new medical regulations required him to update the old office card system in his Westside Veterinary Hospital, on Cork's Model Farm Road, to something more befitting the 21st century. "I wasn't into computers and wouldn't have gotten into them if I hadn't been forced," Richard reflects candidly. However, after seeking the advice of friends



and colleagues, Richard made contact with Stephen Lawler, MD of VetSCOPE who introduced him to the system. "Even though I wasn't computer literate, I thought it looked reasonably straightforward, and after looking at all the options available, this was the one we decided to go with."

**Start-up phase**

Once Richard got going on VetSCOPE (with the helping hand of his daughter who works part time in the practice), the initial challenge was to upload the veterinary medicines data, a painstaking process that took from January to May of 2008. However, Richard quickly found that there was no reason to be daunted by the task. "I had a couple of meetings with Stephen

and he told me what I needed to do. Then, it was just a matter of following his instructions." Two years down the line, Richard's apathy to computers hasn't entirely abated: this isn't a vet you'll find Tweeting or on Facebook, but he is in no doubt that VetSCOPE has changed how his business works, streamlining operations and taking many of the headaches out of running a business.

"The greatest discovery I had with VetSCOPE was when I did my VAT," Richard recalls. "I used to wait until the last moment and would then have to sit down for a full day to do it. With VetSCOPE, it takes literally three clicks of a button and my VAT report comes up." Hoping to develop these benefits further, Richard recently had a meeting with his accountant and Stephen, with the aim of bringing all the practice's accounts onto VetSCOPE. "My ideal, at the end of the year, would be to print up my reports at the touch of a button, hand them to my accountant and let him take it from there."

**Professionalism**

Richard also comments positively on how VetSCOPE has impacted on the relationship between the practice and its customers, and says clients appreciate the professionalism which it allows. "There's been an overall improvement in our service since we introduced VetSCOPE. The reminder system is definitely working better than before. Customers are also getting a detailed receipt for everything we do, which is a big benefit for them." Even in an area as seemingly simple as repeat

*Continued on page 2*

## WELCOME

*In this summer edition of VetSCOPE News, Richard Healy, Westside Veterinary Hospital, Cork talks about how VetSCOPE has changed how his business works, streamlining operations and taking many of the headaches out of running a business.*

*Pain management is a concern for owners and veterinarians alike. In this issue VetSCOPE talks to Samantha Lindley, University of Glasgow, following her presentation to the Sixth European Pain Management Symposium, held in Portugal in April.*

*"Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome," Isaac Asimov memorably wrote. We look at the complex issue of pet bereavement and why the role of the veterinary practice is so important.*

*Vets have always had more need than most for mobile communications. We review the best smartphones currently on the market.*

*S Lawler*

**Stephen Lawler  
Managing Director  
Lawler Developments Ltd**



Continued from page 1



medication, VetSCOPE makes life easier. Previously, staff searched manually through the card system for information. Now with a quick computer search, it can be printed out in seconds. "The dosages are accurate and, from a perception point of view, the practice looks more professional and in control of the situation."

**Future growth**

Richard says he has only "scratched the surface of what VetSCOPE can do". The practice's initial aim was compliance with legislation but, organically from this, the opportunity has come to digitise the client database and take a lot of the hassle out of day-to-day procedures. Looking to the future, Richard would like to utilise the stock control and other features incorporated in the system. However, he is happy to take a step-by-step approach and says one of the benefits of how they have approached VetSCOPE is that "once we got a handle on one thing, there was always something else we could start working on." Of course, as with any computer package, a good help desk is vital and Richard notes another great benefit with VetSCOPE is that "I can ring up Stephen and ask the most obvious question, sometimes on a Saturday morning, and he will give me an answer on the spot".

**THE PAIN BARRIER**

Assessing the level of pain experienced by an animal will always be a challenge. One veterinary specialist offers a method of assessment which takes behaviour as its cue

The issue of pain management has become a growing priority in veterinary practice over the last decade. A new generation of treatments and therapeutic drugs, and much greater awareness of the issue among vets and pet owners, has served to raise its profile. Yet, in spite of the advances, a fundamental problem exists in diagnosing pain in animals: they simply can't tell us how much they are suffering.

**Behaviour**

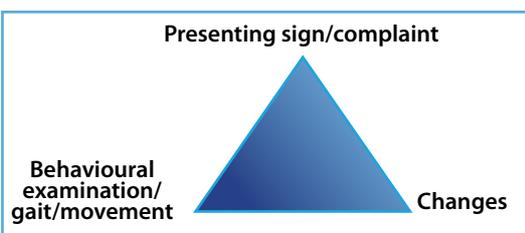
Samantha Lindley is a UK veterinary behavioural consultant who has a special interest in the management of chronic pain in cats and dogs. "Our pets are living longer, so we're seeing much more chronic pain issues than we used to see," Samantha says. "Owners are now expecting the same quality of care for their cats and dogs that they get for themselves."

Addressing the recent Merial European Pain Management Symposium, in April 2010, Samantha explained how a behaviourist approach can help diagnose the level of pain and suffering an animal may be

experiencing. In a presentation that focused on osteoarthritis in dogs, but applicable to a wide variety of musculoskeletal conditions, Samantha pointed out that 'pain' and 'suffering' are not synonymous. "Pain is the sensation, but suffering is the negative way it causes the animal to feel about the sensation," she said. "For example, a dog with an arthritic stifle may have a sensation of pain but that may not stop him walking or running. However, a dog that has the sensation of pain plus all the aversive and unpleasant associations that go with it, is suffering."

**Triangulation**

Samantha went on to present a method through which veterinarians can ascertain the degree of suffering experienced by an animal. Employing a nautical analogy, she explained how 'triangulation', that is taking three different 'bearings' or readings from the situation,



can be used. "The presenting complaint or sign is the starting point or 'first bearing' for most consultations," she said. This could be as simple as the animal being no longer able to jump into a car or, more technically, a radiograph survey indicating the presence of

**The written report**

*Pet owners looking for solutions to pain management often expect administered medical solutions, for example NSAIDs. However, in the long-term treatment of conditions such as osteoarthritis, issues such as bodyweight, diet and exercise are crucial. If veterinarians give what seems like straightforward advice on exercise and diet, is there a danger pet owners will feel they're simply paying to be told the obvious? "The best way to approach this issue with owners is to give them a detailed written report, so they get something very tangible and of value," Samantha says. VetSCOPE can help you in preparing detailed reports for your clients by using the reports section in the visit screen. See the support section of www.vetscope.ie for more information.*

osteoarthritis in the hips. The second 'bearing' to take on board is behavioural changes in the individual animal. "There may be an

on the next steps to take with a convincing risk/benefit analysis. Quoting another authority on the subject, she noted that common sense should always prevail in such situations. "If a dog is running about freely and happily and the only thing it cannot do is get into the car, then the dog needs a ramp and not a hip replacement."

**Behaviour changes**

Samantha believes the triangulation approach is also useful in the assessment of behaviour and behaviour changes, as it may allow the veterinarian to fit together the pieces of a behaviour puzzle. "When I started to do behavioural referral cases, what particularly interested me were the clinical cases. I realised there was a lot of chronic pain out there that wasn't being well managed. Pain is linked to fear and anxiety in animals, so what is first presented as fearful and anxious behaviour in the animal may well have its basis in pain."



allows vets to guide the owner

## PET BEREAVEMENT – TIME TO GET CERTIFIED?

The relationship between owner and vet is never more tested than when a pet dies and the right approach to a pet bereavement is critical for everyone involved

It's an obvious fact that pets have shorter life spans than humans but it doesn't make their deaths any less traumatic to owners. Even more problematic, for pet owners, is the fact that they sometimes have to choose to have their animal euthanised. While all veterinarians recognise that it's a difficult situation, in a busy working environment, it can be all too easy to underestimate the emotional stress involved. A few ill-timed words, or inadvertent actions, could leave owners feel badly done by and possibly seeking the services of a different veterinary practice in future.

### Support

For a pet owner who considers an animal to be a central part of their family life, if not even their best friend, their death can be a fraught emotional experience, with an intensity which may take even them by surprise. One of the issues that makes pet bereavement so complex – and the role of the veterinary team so important – is that the normally reliable support of friends and family often isn't there. "For anybody who has had a pet in their life, they form a unique and very special member of the family," explains Margot Clarke, manager of Pet Bereavement Support Service (PBSS), a UK-based phone counselling service run by The Blue Cross and the Society for Companion Animal Studies. However, a common experience of people contacting the PBSS is disappointment at the response of people close to them. Friends and family "often trivialise that loss and don't recognise it as being special and unique," Margot adds. In fact, as some of calls to the PBSS testify, these bonds can be extremely

strong. "A lot of our callers say to us 'Gosh, I didn't feel this bad when I lost my father or mother or sister,'" Margot explains.

### Practice protocols?

Euthanasia is a normal part of veterinary practice life, but every veterinary practice should review how it manages the situation to ensure that the feelings of the owner are put to the fore throughout. Can it take place at home, for example or, if it needs to take place at the hospital clinic, can a quiet time of the day be found? The owner may wish to say a final goodbye before the animal is put to sleep and some may even wish to be present for the entire event, say a prayer, or take a lock of hair as a memento. The environment should be conducive to ensuring the owners wishes can be carried out without embarrassment or a feeling of being rushed. If the owner chooses to witness the euthanasia, it's a good idea to talk them through the event, which may, after all, unnerve them or upset them further – for example, the fact that their pet's eyes won't close; that there may be twitching and unpleasant sounds even after the animal has died, and that bladder and bowel contents may be released. Introducing the issue of disposal is also important and many Irish veterinary practices now have a direct relationship with pet crematorium service providers, but it's equally important to find the right time and the right language. Talking about 'disposal' in the same breath as advising on euthanasia may seem practical to a vet, but could appear cold hearted indeed to a pet owner.

### Getting certified

For veterinary practices looking to review the level of support and services they provide pet



owners at the end of a pet's life, a certificate in pet bereavement counselling undertaken by one of the practice team could be an important and timely investment in resources.

The PBSS now offers a formal counselling certificate in pet bereavement with the needs of the veterinary profession in mind. While it is UK-based, study can be undertaken through distance learning and, among the modules particularly suitable for veterinary practitioners and nurses are: self-awareness when supporting others; active listening skills; children and pet bereavement; euthanasia; and final arrangements for the pet's body.

Students undertake twelve modules, with the study time for each unit taking approximately one month. On successful completion, participants receive a 'recognition of learning' accredited by the Open Study College and a certificate of completion from The Blue Cross/SCAS. You can find out more about PBSS training by emailing [pbsstraining@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:pbsstraining@bluecross.org.uk). It can't be stressed that the professionalism of a veterinary practice is never more under scrutiny than when a beloved pet dies. All pet owners will leave a clinic feeling upset, but if they also leave feeling they got the help and support they needed, they are certain to return once more when a new pet arrives in their life. 🐾

### Accountants version of VetSCOPE?

**Get VetSCOPE for your accountant and save time and money. Your accountant may take a backup of your system onto their own computer and run all the reports from there, while you continue with your work. Journal entries may be tested on the accountant's version before being implemented into the live system. You can also get your accountant to log on remotely to your system to make changes and further save time and money.**

### Scan lab reports into VetSCOPE

Get a document scanner for VetSCOPE and save a whole lot of time, money and effort. Almost any scanner can be used to store documents within VetSCOPE. However, we have a special scanner that can scan a double-sided A4 page in approximately two seconds. Documents such as lab reports, referral letters and manual notes can all be scanned in. If it's on paper it can be scanned and included in VetSCOPE.



## SMART THINKING

The veterinary profession has more use than most for mobile phones and a new generation of smartphones now offer far more than voice and text. Damien Foley takes a look at the four main contenders

### Apple iPhone

Like all Apple products, the iPhone, launched in 2007, combines sleek design with ease of use and high functionality.



#### Pros

Easy to use and has the most functionality of all the devices available; The Apple OS is compatible with Microsoft Exchange security policies; There is no further licensing required to deliver mail from MS Exchange to the iPhone; Screen quality is excellent for reading e-mail and web pages; Large number of applications available for virtually any use; Free software upgrade from Apple and Remote wipe of the device is possible.

#### Cons

Expensive device if rolling out to all users; Battery life is not as good as with Blackberry and Nokia Symbian devices; and, You can have only one application open at once (multitasking will be available in the new free release of iPhone software).

### Blackberry\*

Primarily appreciated for its ability to send e-mail, Blackberry holds a 20% share of the world smartphone market.

#### Pros

A very reliable solution for the delivery of mail; Excellent battery time; Roaming data charges tend to be cheaper than the other options with most operators and Simple to use.



#### Cons

Most Blackberry features can only be enabled via a Blackberry Enterprise Server (BES), requiring added software and hardware, which, for most small businesses, can make the cost of a complete Blackberry solution prohibitive; Troubleshooting issues with your Blackberry usually requires assistance from the mobile operator and Voice quality has been an issue on some models.

### \*Blackberry use with Microsoft Exchange

The cost of a Blackberry Enterprise server (both hardware and software) should be budgeted for if you are considering deploying Blackberry in your organisation as, without this: Security policies cannot be deployed to the devices from a central location; The device can only synchronise mail over the air, not contacts, calendars or tasks (they can only be synchronised locally by connection to a desktop/laptop) and It is not possible to remotely wipe the device in the event of theft or loss.

### Nokia Symbian (mainly E-series phones)

The E-series smartphones utilise Symbian platform as an open source operating system and software platform.

#### Pros

All compatible devices come pre-installed with the Nokia mail for exchange software; The latest version of the software offers most, if not all, of the features available with the Microsoft windows mobile devices; The software is also compatible with exchange security policies, i.e., security policies can be deployed to all devices that connect to the mail server; Remote wipe of the device is possible; No extra licensing is required for the Nokia devices to synchronise with an MS Exchange server; Excellent battery time and excellent voice quality; Devices are low-cost and they are among the cheapest devices available on a pay-monthly plan; and, Simple to use.



#### Cons

Functionality is limited and there is only a small range of applications available for the Nokia Symbian phones (compared to the iPhone and Microsoft Windows mobile); The mail for exchange client does not support the synchronisation of sub-folders in your inbox; The mail for exchange client does not support the synchronisation of any other folder other than the inbox, i.e., sent items, drafts, etc.

### Microsoft Windows mobile

A mobile operating system developed by Microsoft, it

features a suite of basic Microsoft applications with third-party software also available.

#### Pros

Offers the best Microsoft application experience of all the devices; Includes pocket office, i.e., pocket Outlook, pocket Excel, pocket Word, pocket PowerPoint; Full compatibility with all MS Exchange security policies; Remote wipe of the device is possible; Full server message search is allowed; and, Can synchronise all folders and subfolders in your mailbox.

#### Cons

Battery time not as good as with Blackberry and Nokia Symbian devices; Devices are expensive; and, The range of devices available is quite limited. Damien Foley is chief executive of CMGi. Email [damien.foley@cmgi.ie](mailto:damien.foley@cmgi.ie)



## Revenue Leaflet on Cash Registers

**In April 2010 the Revenue Commissioners issued a leaflet outlining your obligation to maintain proper books and records.**

If you are currently using a standard cash register then does it record all entries with a uniquely identifiable sequential number along with date and time? **This is mandatory from July 2008.**

We are happy to confirm that VetSCOPE EPOS (Electronic Point of Sale) fully complies with the legislation. VetSCOPE EPOS is a quick and easy cash register solution that can be used with or without barcoding equipment. For more information see [www.vetscope.ie](http://www.vetscope.ie)

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