

## My Week Shadowing at the Veterinary Orthopedic Sports Medicine Group

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The opportunity to learn under an experienced innovator in your field that shares your same passion is priceless. Without a dedication to ongoing professional development, you remain stagnant. I founded McIntyre Canine Rehabilitation on the core commitment to always provide the best care possible to my clients. When I connected with Dr. Sherman Canapp about the possibility of interning at Veterinary Orthopaedic Sports Medicine Group (VOSM), I knew instantly that this was an opportunity I needed to seize. The entire VOSM team opened their doors to me for a full week of learning and I want to share that experience with you.

VOSM is located in Annapolis Junction and is a progressive centre that is pushing the edge of veterinary medicine by providing quality veterinary orthopaedic surgery, rehabilitation care, and regenerative medicine treatment options to canine clients. Their state-of-the art 16,000 square feet facility includes a variety of cutting edge diagnostic options for canine companions and their treatment selection and use of regenerative medicine (using the body's own cells to heal and regenerate damaged tissues) is on par with what we'd expect for humans!

Like many people, I first learned of Dr. Sherman and Dr. Deb Canapp from a Facebook Live session with Susan Garrett. Susan had taken her dog Swagger down to VOSM for a comprehensive assessment of his ongoing shoulder issues. From there, several Facebook Live sessions were conducted with Sherman and Deb explaining Swagger's injury (medial shoulder syndrome), the assessment and diagnostic techniques for this injury, as well as the regenerative medicine and rehabilitation options.

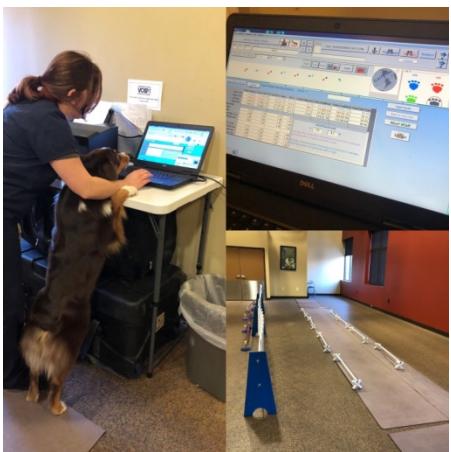
It was not long after their second Facebook Live with Susan that Dr. Canapp and I started to speak about the potential opportunity for my company, McIntyre Canine Rehabilitation, to take on some of VOSM's canine rehabilitation referrals post VOSM assessment. Dr. Canapp has always strongly supported the use of physical therapists in the rehabilitation process. Eager to participate in this opportunity, I quickly cleared my schedule for an entire week in February to shadow, learn, and collaborate with the VOSM team, including exploring the services they offer and learning about their rehabilitation approach!

When I reflect back on this week, it's very clear to me that there are several important areas in which the VOSM approach resonates with my core philosophies as a physiotherapist and where I believe the future of canine rehabilitation should be heading for our canine companions here in Canada.



Figure 1 Dr. Sherman Canapp and Carolyn in the OR suite!

First, their level of collaborative practice was exemplary. Not only was collaborative practice evident within the multi-disciplinary team of surgeons, vet techs, and rehab specialists at VOSM, but also between the primary care veterinarian and the client's rehabilitation team back home. Many of the clients that come to VOSM travel from out of state or out of country. Although they return back for their re-checks, many go back



**Figure 2 Gait4Dog® Objective Gait Analysis System**

to their primary veterinarians or rehab teams to complete their homework in between. VOSM ensures that the client leaves with the proper discharge paperwork including full rehabilitation protocols and guidelines to adhere to. In addition to keeping the entire patient's circle of care in mind, the VOSM practitioners can often be found chatting and consulting with one another either formally (e.g. rounds) or informally (e.g. hallway chats) about a patient's diagnosis, care plan, and treatment. It is the team approach at VOSM where everyone's contributions, regardless of their specialty are heard and valued. I found this so refreshing! I'm sure all canine rehab professionals have experienced sending a report to a vet concerning a client and either receiving a very brief acknowledgment or none at all. I continue to still experience this from time to time in my human practice while working with the general practitioners. Communication in this industry is

essential to the overall care of the dog. Many of our canine athletes have a variety of health professionals on their team – from massage therapists to chiropractors to physiotherapists to vets. Collaboration and working with each other to maximize our unique strengths is critical to the success of our treatment and care plans. Instead of the mind set of "US" versus "THEM", the focus needs to be on the "WE" and how we can collectively work together.

Second, their focus on objective outcome measures and evidence based practice are the cornerstone of their assessments and treatments. VOSM receives referrals from all over the world and any new client that comes in (whether it be a baseline/injury assessment for a secret service dog or a pain management consult for an elderly arthritic dog), the diagnostic protocol is similar and includes a wide array of state-of-the-art objective measures including: stance analyzer (Companion Animal Health), gait analysis (GAIT4Dog), musculoskeletal ultrasound, in-house MRI, in-house blood work lab, digital radiograph, and arthroscopy procedures. Following the results of these tests, the VOSM team will incorporate a combination of experience and research evidence to guide their treatments (the true art and science of practice!). VOSM is also an active contributor to the research world and often has several clinical trials on the go to further improve, test, and validate their treatment approaches.

Third, VOSM's willingness to teach and progress the skills of their staff or visiting interns/students from all over the world was clearly evident. Although I was primarily shadowing Dr. Sherman training, I watched my first live TPLO with Dr. Leasure who explained the surgical procedure in great detail and the impact of the surgery on the rehabilitation process. Two things I learned: 1) it is very clear why TPLO patients have weak hamstrings post operatively and 2) following this surgery your dog will still get a positive cranial drawer test BUT a negative tibial thrust -it's all about angles! From there I spent several hours observing consultations and re-checks with Dr. Matt Brunke, DVM, Diplomate American College of Veterinary Sports Medicine and

Rehabilitation who really believes in the big picture and a practical approach to his patients. Although his caseload is full of highly complex clients, Dr. Brunke has a great rapport with each and every owner and takes whatever time necessary to explain upcoming procedures and treatment options without the owner feeling rushed or uneasy. There is never a cookie cutter approach to the care provided at VOSM and clients are always educated and informed about the various treatment options so they can choose options that align with their personal preferences and financial resources. I also had the pleasure to observe Dr. Deb Canapp using the musculoskeletal ultrasound. I am still in awe at what she can find and diagnose from her ultrasounds – these canine patients are SO fortunate to have an ultrasonographer with her credentials and abilities.

Lastly, what really stood out is how much they want to help and give back to the community. Dr. Canapp has started “Questions for Canapp” – a 30-60 minute Facebook Live where he addresses questions from clients and dog owners from all over the world. These sessions are designed to improve awareness and education in a wide variety of topics related to our canine companions. Dr. Canapp is also the founder of Project Go which was designed to assist with the care of injured service or rescue animals where funding is an issue. Some of these procedures can be expensive and often times, police agencies or rescue groups have a fixed amount of funds dedicated to treating injuries. Dr. Canapp set this project up to raise funding and awareness to ensure these dogs receive the best care possible and some financial assistance to help cover costs.

Walking away from an experience like this has certainly given me plenty to think about in my current canine rehabilitation practice. Here are a few take away messages that I encourage ever one to think about!



*Figure 3* Dr. Sherman Canapp completes an assessment on Carolyn's Australian Shepherd Quinn

- **Objective data:** As clinicians, we need to move away from solely relying on subjective data and ensuring that we incorporate objective outcome measures in our assessments. McIntyre Canine Rehabilitation is excited to have recently added the Companion Animal Health Stance Analyzer as an objective source of data that offers a non-invasive evaluation of lameness that can monitor and track improvements over time.
- **Improving communication:** We need to enhance communication across all members of the team for timely action. McIntyre Canine Rehabilitation is committed to ongoing collaboration with all members of the team and to further educate DVMs that are less familiar with the rehabilitation approach and its benefits.
- **Complex cases:** When you come across a dog that is not improving with traditional conservative treatment options, it is time to start thinking outside of the box about what else we can offer our canine companions or where we could refer them to for additional treatment options. The use of regenerative medicine is not a cookie cutter approach therapy,

but should be considered as a potential treatment option if conservative measures are not working.

- **Education and Awareness:** As a canine rehabilitation professional, I feel it is important to continue to bring awareness to dog owners and canine health professionals about what makes physiotherapy unique and the strengths that we bring to the rehabilitation table.

Having been submersed in VOSM for a week, I know it would be amazing to have such a facility close to home. The passion, dedication, and commitment of the VOSM staff to the care of their patients was contagious. I strongly believe that a multi-disciplinary rehabilitation clinic including advanced diagnostics and ongoing progressive and validated treatment options (e.g. regenerative medicine) would be of great benefit and asset to our current approach to rehabilitation and care of our companion animal. #VOSM Canada! As a dog owner, I would go to great lengths to ensure my dog had all available options – wouldn't you?

#### **About McIntyre Canine Rehabilitation**

Carolyn is uniquely qualified with a Master of Science in Physiotherapy and advanced training in Canine Rehabilitation through the Canadian Physiotherapy Association. McIntyre Canine Rehabilitation is a mobile Canine Rehab Company from Guelph, ON with a passion for injury prevention and canine conditioning. Services include: canine conditioning workshops and seminars; one on one sessions for fitness evaluations (to prevent injuries) and physical rehabilitation (to recover from injuries, surgery, or illness), online performance consults via Skype services, baseline sporting dog assessments, canine conditioning group classes, and retailer for therapeutic dog coats and crate liners and Fit PAWS © fitness equipment.

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