

# Veterinary dialogue trainer: a computer game to improve communication skills in bovine practitioners.

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## INTRODUCTION

Effective communication can aid bovine veterinarians in improving client relationships in herd health consultancy, improving client satisfaction, adherence to veterinary advice and patient welfare and health.

Communication skills are often taught using traditional role-play training, which has limitations, e.g., time constraints, assessments and cost.

The Veterinary DialogueTrainer (VDT)(Fig. 1) is a new tool mitigating these barriers. It is a serious game platform using 'digital role-play' with avatars, developed to enhance and assess learning outcomes, improve use of learned skills, and increase cost-effectiveness of communication training.

## OBJECTIVE

The objective of this pilot study was to determine suitability and applicability for using the VDT.

More on this program can be found at [www.preventive-vetconsultancy.com](http://www.preventive-vetconsultancy.com)

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Finnish bovine veterinarians participated in a communication training using VDT, a virtual game using 'digital role-play', developed to enhance learning outcomes, improve use of learned skills and increase cost-effectiveness of communication training.

VDT scores measure multiple aspects of communication on a 0-100% scale, based on motivational interviewing methodology and Calgary-Cambridge guidelines.

Twenty-four veterinarians completed the provided scenario at least twice; we compared first and second scores.

Veterinary Dialogue Trainer is a promising tool for teaching/monitoring veterinary communication competencies and preparing for offline role-plays and real-life conversations in veterinary practice.



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## RESULTS

Mean ( $\pm$ SD) number attempts participants played the scenario was  $4.1 \pm 2.6$ , with highest total score reached after  $3.7 \pm 2.0$  attempts.

All participants scored  $<50\%$  at the first attempt of playing the scenario, whereas most participants ( $n=22$ ) increased their initial score at the second attempt.

Mean score increased from  $15\%$  ( $\pm 14\%$ ) to  $43\%$  ( $\pm 29\%$ ) (paired T-test,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the majority ( $n=17$ ) of participants was able to reach a score  $>80\%$  after  $4.0$  ( $\pm 1.6$ ) attempts.

Communication skills scores increased when using the VDT.

FIGURE 1. Screenshot of the veterinary dialogue trainer (VDT).



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